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URBANÉ

AND HIS FRIENDS.

BY

MRS. E. PRENTISS,

AUTHOR OF "STEPPING HEAVENWARD," "AUNT JANE'S HERO," ETC. ETC.

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INTRODUCTION.

URBANÉ.

"Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hung up against the wall, and this was the fashion of it: it had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written on his lips, the world was behind his back; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head."

NOT very unlike this portrait, is that of one whom we now introduce under a fictitious name. Urbané is no longer young; he has been a Christian pastor for more than thirty years. During all that time, he has been listening to lamentations and confessions without number, from those professing the name of Christ. Doubts, difficulties, sins, failures, sometimes agonising temptations and falls, have met him everywhere; yet he has said to himself, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever. But are most of the men and women under my influence, glorifying Him? And are they enjoying Him? And if not, why not?" He pondered and prayed over these questions for years,

meanwhile preaching Christ from week to week, out of the depths of an experience that made his face to shine as he spake of Him; the consequence of which was, that ever and anon, a man or a woman would come to him with such language as this:

"I know I ought to love to read the Bible, but I do not." "I get no answers to my prayers." "I am tormented with doubts; I fear I am not regenerate." "My easily-besetting sins overcome me; I get no dominion over them." "I have lost my property, and am anxious to know what I have done to make God so angry with me." "My children are disobedient and ungrateful and worldly. Why am I so unfortunate?"

Again and again, Urbané tried to explain and do away with these difficulties; they confronted him in all directions, until at last, he bethought himself of devoting one evening in each week to instructions more colloquial and simple than those of the pulpit, and thus meet the wants so painfully felt and expressed.

His plan was to set his young people upon the *study* of the Bible, in place of the careless habit of mechanical reading, so much the evil of the day. And while he did not pretend to strike out new and original thoughts, his living voice had a power that cannot be reproduced upon paper. Imagine a man of threescore years, every inch a man, and yet with feminine sweetness in his face: imagine a form dilating, at times, as earnest thought filled and expanded it; behold one that has "seen the Lord," standing up week after week, year after year, to "plead with men," to look also and live,

and you have a faint idea of one whose passion was his Christ. He had caught up no new and popular doctrine, but what he spake he knew. He had been down into a mine, and patiently sought there for hid treasure; he had come up to share his silver and his gold with whoever would accept them from his hand. No one man knew his whole life. One could say, "He has talked and prayed with me, urging me to self-consecration, a score of times." And another, "When I was sick he came unto me, and brought sunshine into my room, for weeks and months." And another, "He snatched me out of a career that was about to ruin my soul; it cost him prayers and tears and sleepless nights; but he *lavished* them upon me." "To me he came when I was poor, and a stranger; he took me by the hand and encouraged me," could be said by yet another. "He gave me the very coat from his back, and the shoes from his feet." "He poured wine and oil into the wounds of a guilty conscience, he was my son of consolation, when I was weeping over a new-made grave; I owe him life-long devotion."

Yet no such language was heard. Urbané did his work, not to be seen of men, but of God; his right hand knew not what was done by the left; he had no thirst for human praise; he rarely thought or spoke of himself, but hid himself humbly away behind his Lord.

It has been thought that the conversations held in the study of this Christian pastor, might meet the wants of a class always existing in the Church, who

are dissatisfied with themselves, yet not satisfied with Christ; who would style themselves, as

> "Grovellers below, yet wanting will to rise;
> Tired of the world, unfitted for the skies."

Most of those who attended the meetings regularly were young, yet not of the youngest; there were professional men and business men; there were wives and mothers, who came thirsting for the truth. Others, eager to harmonise their two separate masters, God and Mammon, Christ and self, came and went, came and went. If there was no ball or festival, they would come idling into Urbané's library, personal friendship and respect for him being quite as much their impelling motive as any other. Then there were some who had found life a disappointment, a failure, and came for healing.

There were two friends whose presence he always desired, fancying they could sometimes state a truth more happily than himself. Philologus was a man of less pliable character than Urbané, but he was one who studied the Word of God with great diligence; his Greek Testament, amply interleaved, and enriched with careful notes in his own hand, bore witness to no common research. Claudia had been the friend of both from her youth up. She was one of the least among petite women; not a dwarf, but a perfect little fairy, and the brightest of souls looked out of her shining eyes; once seen, she was never to be forgotten; if you met her in a picture gallery, hers was the image

you carried away with you, and wished most you could hang on your walls.

She had long been a widow, and her home was with a married daughter, who had fitted up a room for her in her own house, with graceful, dainty hands; here the aged saint meditated on the Word day and night; here she held communion with her God and Saviour in prayer; here she wrote letters of love and counsel, and hence went forth the alms-deeds that she did.

"Now the name of that chamber was PEACE."

URBANÉ.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEETING AND ITS DESIGN.

"YOU have come here to-night, my friends," said Urbané, "at my invitation, and I will proceed, at once, to state my reasons for calling you together. From time to time, during my whole pastoral experience, I have been pained by the sighs of those whose path in the divine life has been up the 'Hill Difficulty,' and through a wilderness where no water is. Now this weariness and painfulness is not the plan of God; He has designed a more excellent way. I shall not attempt to disguise the fact that our existence upon earth is a period of probation and discipline, but I hope also to show that the peace promised by Christ was intended by Him as our present inheritance. It will be my purpose to glance, in an informal way, at some of the objects of our faith; to increase your reverence for the Word of God, to persuade you to newness of life, and to make Christ your All-in-all. It is true that this is the character of my

preaching, and men may say that having done my duty in the pulpit, I may leave you to your own consciences But my present attitude towards you is not so much one of duty as of love. You are, most of you, my spiritual children, and, as such, your interests are dear to me as my own. I want you to reach the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Questions of the day will come up from time to time, and I shall be glad to hear your views of them and to give you mine. And I propose that, before entering upon our discussions, we should, each evening, observe a moment or two of silent prayer, and that at the close of the meetings there should be one or more prayers, according as the Spirit gives you utterance."

There is peculiar solemnity in silent, social prayer, and the little company now engaged in it were not novices in the devout act. Urbané was in the habit of beginning his weekly prayer-meetings thus, and of closing his sacramental services in the same way.

There were various types of character represented here, as will gradually become apparent. And it will be seen that Urbané permitted the conversations to become, sometimes, discursive; one man starting a thought not necessarily evolved from the subject under discussion, and claiming attention to it as, at the moment, occupying his mind. It may be added, too, that the labour spent by Urbané on these young Christians does not all appear in these pages. He was sought by many of them for more personal conversations; to some he wrote letter after letter, and their slowness and

dulness did not weary, nor their impatience mislead him; there lay at the bottom of his heart a love for Christ that made the smallest service for Him a delight.

The first meeting was quite a lively one. Urbané furnished slips of paper, on which each should write a list of the subjects he or she desired to have presented.

A specimen may as well be given.

"Can you tell me why I do not love the Bible more?"

"What is the origin of evil?"

"How perfect may we expect to become?"

"Why is prayer a weariness to so many?"

"Is it a very bad sign to dislike prayer-meetings?"

"What are innocent amusements?"

"How far should Christians be separate from the world?"

"Why are there so few really happy people?"

This is a specimen of the knotty questions Urbané was called upon to solve; and a somewhat dubious smile was his reply to each as he read it.

"I presume that we may touch upon some of these subjects," he said, "but they will come in among graver ones. I will, as far as possible, shape my plan in reference to them. But, first of all, I desire to persuade you to study the Word of God more faithfully than you have been in the habit of doing."

Not much more was done on this evening; and after the young people had withdrawn, their three elders remained, talking over the puerility of many of the

questions presented, and planning the best methods of future procedure.

"Of course, I do not mean to propound a system of theology," said Urbané, "but to give my general theory of the Christian life, and remove doubts and difficulties as far as I can do so. I shall put great dependence on your prayers."

"I was singularly conscious of the presence of the Spirit in our silent prayer this evening," said Claudia.

"So was I," said Urbané. "How wonderfully and beautifully our Lord responds to our poor little attempts to serve Him!"

"And it is all so humbling!" said Claudia.

"What subject do you propose to take up next week?" asked Philologus.

"The Bible itself. Unless I can convince our young people of its claims, and make them study its truths for themselves, they will never be strong, wise believers—never."

"I suppose they will fluctuate in numbers?"

"Of course. But as long as a single soul comes, I mean to devote the evening to that soul."

"Amen!" said Claudia.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIBLE.

"I WISH to devote this evening," said Urbané, "to consideration of the Bible, and the frequent complaints of want of love for the Word of God. These lamentations come from those whose piety I cannot doubt, and most of whom force themselves to the task of daily reading a chapter or more. The difficulty does not lie in the fact that the Bible is not adapted to their wants, or that they entirely lack the spirituality requisite to true comprehension of its meaning. I am inclined to think that very often the evil lies here; too large a portion is read at one time, and the mind thus fails to grasp truths it does not weigh and ponder. Now, the Word is a mine of gold; but to reach this treasure we must go down into the depths, with the pickaxe on the shoulder, and patiently work now this vein, now that."

"That will do for men of leisure," said Hermes, "but not for me."

"Yet you read the Scriptures daily, do you not?" asked Philologus.

"At family worship, of course," was the reply.

"Could you not find time to study one clause of a verse each day?" asked Urbané.

"Do you really imagine that such a trifling exercise as that would yield any fruit?" asked Hermes, with a contempt he could not conceal.

"I should like to have you give it a fair trial," said Urbané quietly, and well knowing that this trifling exercise, if honestly continued, would ripen into a more earnest one.

"We receive the Bible," said Philologus, "too much like a cup from which we may carelessly drink, imbibing refreshment, as a matter of course."

"My great difficulty," said Apelles, "lies chiefly in a fearful inability to claim its promises. I have been such a poor sinner, so unworthy the divine regard, that I dare not believe that these words of love are for me."

"May I ask," said Urbané, "for whom they are intended?"

"Well, I suppose, love is for the beloved."

"And are not you among that number? Has not Christ done infinitely more for you than simply make pleasant promises? Has He not died for you?"

"I must believe that He has, or sink in despair. I do believe it with my head, but not, as I want to do, with my heart."

"I like the grand old prophecies," said Hermes. "I like to read about Old Testament saints. But I feel about the promises as Apelles does."

"Yet it is not presumptuous to appropriate them," said Urbané. "Their force and beauty grow out of the character of God, and have nothing whatever to do with

our worthiness or unworthiness. Not to believe this is to make Him a liar. Of course, no man on earth has a right to the smallest crumb of divine bounty; we cannot think too humbly of our claims to it. On the other hand, we cannot too much magnify the bounty and opulence of our Lord. We are

"'So dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer we cannot be;
For, in the person of His Son,
We are as dear as He.'"

"I cannot realise that," said Apelles.

"We must study the character of God," replied Urbané.

"You seem disposed to turn us all into students," said Hermes. "Now, I have always thought religion a matter of the emotions; and not being myself an emotional man, supposed I never could become a live Christian."

"I hope, in the course of our conversations, to convince you that religion is far from dwelling in so low a region as the fluctuating feelings of humanity," was the reply.

"For my part," said Apelles, "I envy those who love and feast upon the Bible; for, though I speak it with shame, I am lacking in that love. I read a passage every day, of course, in my closet, and again in my family, but not as my old father did. Once, when he thought himself unobserved, he has been seen to press the sacred book to his lips. And on her death-bed, my mother

called for hers, and took leave of it as tenderly as she said farewell to her children."

"That precious memory," said Urbané, "will, sooner or later, make this book as dear to you, my friend."

"I wish I could believe that," he replied.

"How David loved the Word!" said Claudia. "He says: 'I opened my mouth and panted; for I longed for Thy commandments.' 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto Thy judgments at all times.' 'How sweet are Thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.' Are there not Christians in our own day who can use similar language?"

"Undoubtedly there are," said Urbané.

"How many, I wonder?" asked Hermes.

"As many," replied Urbané, "as can say, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.'"

"You think, then, that love to God and love for His Word run parallel with each other?" said Apelles.

"I am afraid," was the reply, "if Christ should return to this earth in human form, and go about preaching such doctrines as are taught in the Bible, that after the natural curiosity to see and hear Him had been gratified, the mass of men would weary of His teachings, just as they weary of the Bible now."

"But think what crowds He drew!" said Amplias.

"But these crowds were not attracted merely by His instructions," replied Urbané. "They came to be healed of all manner of diseases and infirmities."

"And our own case is analogous to theirs," said

Claudia. "We go to His written Word because we find ourselves infirm in wisdom and knowledge, and because we are sin-sick and miserable."

"Yes; just in proportion to a Christian's consciousness of his ignorance and sinfulness, will he consult and ponder over the truths of revelation," said Urbané.

"It remains, then, for me to get greater discoveries of mine. And how am I to do that?" cried Apelles.

"May I ask you to seek an answer to that question by turning to James i. 5?"

"It is not necessary to turn to that familiar passage, for I can repeat it: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. Of course, I do this every day. And, by the by, I hope we may study up the subject of prayer some evening."

"Nothing could be more timely," said Urbané.

"Have you any suggestion to make as to our private study of the Word?" asked Amplias. "I have been greatly baffled in getting light on different passages. I inherited a theological library from a relative, and am continually seeking information from commentaries. But I do not remember a single instance where I found what I sought. The passage that mystified me had been, apparently, as unintelligible to the author I consulted."

"Coleridge says," replied Philologus, "that when commentators come to difficult passages, they usually give their understandings a holiday."

"One pleasant and profitable method of Biblical study

is opened to us in the delightful volumes in which each verse has its own references printed with it," said Urbané. "And some persons prepare a book in which they gather passages which they believe may be classified under one head."

"Which they *believe* may be thus classified?" repeated Apelles.

"I refer, in that remark, to the fact that men are prone to form theories, and then collect portions of Scripture to support those theories. It is to be deplored that this is the case. You can make detached passages prove almost everything. This shows the importance of *searching* the Scriptures, and of doing that in a child-like, teachable temper, waiting upon God at every step for the illumination of His Spirit."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," said Philologus. "How many men go to it to get these four gifts?"

"And I wonder," said Hermes, "who has time for such research? I never have had, for one. To tell the truth, I have never made the Scriptures a study until now. On week days my business absorbs all my time and thoughts; on Sundays I have my two mission-classes, and listen to two sermons. It has always seemed to me the business of the clergy to interpret the meaning of the Word to us hard workers. They have nothing else to do; and while we are knocking about the world, they can study at their leisure, and give us the results."

"There is not a true man among them," said Urbané, "who would like to take the responsibility of doing your thinking for you. We have our treasure in earthen vessels. The fact that a man is a learned theologian and a minister does not make him infallible. He may misinterpret Scripture, and so be a blind teacher of the blind."

"My opinions," said Hermes, "on most subjects are decided. The truths of the Bible have been familiar to me from my childhood."

"I know it," replied Urbané; "but familiarity with truth is not enough. Your having a medicine-chest in your house, with whose contents you are acquainted, does not, of itself, heal your diseases. Let us look at our fallen human race for a moment, as we should be if no divine revelation had been made to us. Launched upon the sea of life, a company of voyagers without chart or compass, we should be as ignorant of our origin and of our destination as the beasts that perish. Joy would be a mockery, for it would be without reason, and would apparently end with life. Pain and sorrow would put on the uncompromising form of dark, mysterious fate. Some amiable instincts might here and there adorn our lives; but, at the best, we should be amiable heathen, without hope and without God. We should create a divinity in our own unsanctified imaginations, or form him of wood, or stone, or brass; we should find him in a river, and fling our living treasures into his bosom, hoping to appease his fancied wrath. Incapable of holy conceptions, we should make our king and lord superior

to ourselves only in power and in crime; we should fear, but never love him. Life would be one long irritating problem, whose end would be inexorable graves, into which we should be thrown by despairing hands, for eternal separation from all we loved, all who loved us, if indeed we allow that love, in any nobility of sentiment, could exist in hearts that know not God."

"How little I have realised all this!" said Apelles. "How dull and tedious have been most of the hours I have spent over this Book! Is the Church of Christ largely made of such men as I? I hope not."

"But don't you see that this very first meeting of ours is bearing fruit? Surely our Lord is smiling on our attempt to magnify His goodness and wisdom in giving us the written Word. I do hope and pray that one result of these evenings together, may be a spirit of gratitude for all His gifts, as they come up before us."

"These remarks," said Amplias, "are, to my mind, very suggestive, and have already awakened within me an interest in Foreign Missions hitherto unknown. I had never reflected much on that subject, or realised the miserable condition of a nation or an individual ignorant of revealed truth. Because I had known it from a child, I have undervalued it."

"We are prone to undervalue all our gifts. Suppose we run lightly—for we have time for nothing more—over some of the truths for the want of which we should suffer, had no revelation been made to us. In the first place, we should know nothing of God as our Heavenly Father, or of Christ, or the Holy Ghost."

"Nor of immortality," said Hermes.

"And next to nothing of ourselves," said Apelles.

"The death of friends would be a hopeless, agonising mystery," said Claudia.

"We should be ignorant of the 'many mansions' prepared for us in heaven," said Amplias.

"Nor should we understand the monitions of conscience," said Philologus.

"Are you sure of that?" asked Apelles. "It is said of the Gentiles, that 'having not the law, they are a law unto themselves.'"

"Perhaps you failed to observe that I did not say we should be destitute of conscience, but that conscience would be destitute of an interpreter. We should only know right from wrong in an imperfect way."

"But the stores of knowledge laid up for man in God's Word increase his condemnation. There may be periods in one's history when one might wish he had never been taught divine truth," said Hermes.

"In the life of a *Christian?*" asked Urbané.

"Yes. In hours of remorse, for instance."

"Dear brother, pardon me, but I think that a truly regenerate soul loves the law just as well as it does the gospel."

"Perhaps so; but that has not been my experience. I have *smarted* under the law."

"We shall have to discuss that point at some future meeting," said Urbané, "for our evening is drawing to a close. Let us make it a subject of special prayer during the week, that God, by His Spirit, would be present in

our meetings. And I trust you will all feel free to bring friends with you at your pleasure."

"I know several young people who would like to come. But they would come as I do, in great ignorance," said Apelles.

"Let them come, by all means."

Philologus here remarked that he hoped all would lay to heart the desire expressed by Urbané, that the Word of God might be henceforth made a *study*.

"It should be prayed over, as well as studied," said Claudia.

"Yes; the Holy Spirit is the only true Interpreter of truth," said Urbané.

"All very well for you men of leisure. But I shall not have a moment to myself," said Hermes, laughing.

"Nor I," said Amplias.

"I must try to make time, somehow," said Apelles. "And to this intent I will now bid you all good-night, and go home."

"I should like to have you come prepared next week," said Urbané, "to describe the character of the Apostolic Christian in scriptural language."

It was not late, but some had a long distance to go, and now took leave. Others, who had not ventured to speak through youth and inexperience, lingered near Urbané, asking questions he was only too glad to hear and to answer. They all alike complained of a neglected or formally read Bible, but seemed waking up to a new sense of its claims. Thus early the Lord and Master declared His presence in this little assembly, and His

readiness to bless every honest attempt to learn His will.

After the company had dispersed, Urbané was seized with a momentary dejection. The weight of the truth to which he had aimed to direct their minds, oppressed him by its very wealth. But light and peace returned to his soul the moment he knelt for his evening prayer; if he was a feeble instrument, as he deeply felt himself to be, there was all the more reason why divine strength should be given him; so he trusted, and was not afraid.

CHAPTER III.

THE APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN.

"My object in proposing to learn the characteristics of the Apostolic Christian, will become apparent very shortly," said Urbané. "I see that some of you have your Bibles with you, and are prepared to read its testimony, which I hope will be done informally."

"I have written out my texts," said Apelles, "and this is the first: 'He continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.'"

"'He ate his bread with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people,'" said Helvia.

"'He urged men to repent,'" said Hermes.

"'He rejoiced that he was accounted worthy to suffer shame for His name.'"

"'He gave himself continually to prayer;'"

"'Was full of faith.'"

"He forgave his murderers. He knelt down and cried, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'"

"'He opened his mouth and preached Jesus.' 'He

spake boldly in that name,' and 'He was a chosen vessel unto God.'"

"'He was a just man.'"

"He was humble, for when one fell down at his feet, he said, 'Stand up; I myself also am a man.'"

"And again he speaks of himself as the 'chief of sinners,' and 'least of all saints.'"

"He believed in intercessory prayer," said Claudia, who then read Acts xii. 5.

"'He was filled with the Holy Ghost.'"

"'And with joy.'" Acts xiii. 52.

"'He coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.'"

"'He was ready, not to be bound only, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.'"

"He was full of tender sympathy. 'What mean ye, to weep and break my heart?' 'Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee.' 'Out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears.'"

"He was full of love," said Urbané. "'Being affectionately desirous of you.' 'But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.' 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.'"

"He had 'the full assurance of hope.'"

"He was always progressing," said Urbané.

"'But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.' 'Add to your faith virtue, and to

virtue knowledge.' And he was 'not slothful in business.'"

"Yet that did not prevent his being 'fervent in spirit'!" said Urbané.

"He 'distributed to the necessity of saints, and was given to hospitality.'"

"He did not please himself because 'even Christ pleased not Himself,'" said Apelles, "'and he determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'"

"He resisted the devil."

"Though 'sorrowful, he was always rejoicing.'"

"He was 'a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.'"

"'Christ dwelt in his heart by faith.'"

"He did not 'despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when he was rebuked of Him.'"

"And this," said Urbané, "was the temper in which he departed to be with Christ:

"'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.'

"We have now gathered up some of the characteristics of the Christian who lived in the time of Paul and of John, from the Word of God. But we have other testimony, that of men who lived among those who composed the early Christian Church, and saw their piety towards

God and man. It was an age of idolatry and of persecution; it required high devotion to renounce the superstitions of the times, and to meet the painful results of loyalty to Christ. Men and women, and children, even, became martyrs to the truth, rather than deny their Lord. 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' The early Christians were as humble as little children. Besides disclaiming all right to the honours of life, they did not disdain to perform many of its menial offices, such as preparing food, visiting the imprisoned, kissing their chains, dressing their wounds, and washing their feet. When one was asked why she stooped to such low offices, she replied, 'Our glory and nobility lies in this, that we are the servants of Christ.' They were not in the habit of looking upon the public sports of the day, their happiness coming from a higher source; nor did they manifest any inordinate regret in parting with the objects most dear to them—friends, property, liberty, or life itself. It is related of one lady, that when her husband and two sons were stricken down at her side, and when she was expected to break forth into a passion of tears, tear her hair, rend her garments and the like, she stood still for a moment, and then falling down, as it were, at the feet of Christ, cried, 'Lord, I shall serve Thee more readily and nimbly, by being eased of the weight Thou hast taken from me.'

"It was said of them that martyrdom could not hurt them, since they had no other contentment in this world equal to getting out of it. It was their care to familiarise themselves with the thought of death and of eternity;

hence the 'sobriety' of which Paul speaks. Their dress and demeanour was very simple. 'It is not enough,' says Tertullian, 'that a Christian be chaste and modest; he must *appear* to be so.' At the same time, they avoided singularity as they avoided extravagance and ostentation, conforming themselves to the innocent customs of their times. They were most true and loyal to their Master. The cross, the rack, the sword, the wild beast, in turn, put their fealty to the test. No matter what befell them, their souls were stayed upon God, and even women and little children bore their sufferings in a patient silence that put their tormentors to shame. Then, their love to each other was second only to their devotion to their Lord. 'See how these Christians love one another!' was the cry of even their enemies."

"Times have changed since that day. The cry now might rather be, See how these Christians assail each other with tongue and pen!" said Philologus.

"You think, then, that the Church has degenerated?" asked Apelles.

"In some respects I do. But the Lord keeps a remnant of His own beloved ones, in every age, and has one now."

"Indeed! Where is it?"

"Some of it is in this room."

"Oh, do you find apostolic piety anywhere at the present day?" cried Hermes.

"Why not? Christ belongs to our own day as well as to any day of the past; and wherever He is. there you will find His disciples."

"You are more fortunate than myself, if you know many men in our own times who bear much resemblance to the saints of Holy Writ," said Hermes.

"It is my strength and joy to know such," said Urbané.

"Men who are ready, if need be, to die for Christ?"

"Ay; and women too."

"Wherein lies the proof of such devotion, since the age makes no demand for martyrs?"

"There are martyrdoms going on every day, whose sufferings far transcend anything ever endured at the stake, and they are borne with no prestige. I have stood at the side of many a bed that was literally a rack, though called a couch, and heard the lip that quivered with pain sing songs of praise to Christ which did Him an honour, that thrilled me to the heart. Dying martyrdom introduces the departing saint into the presence of his Lord and the joy of eternal day. Living martyrdom drags its victim through weeks, months, years of agony; he dies to-day, yet lives to die to-morrow; and ofttimes the character of the disease clogs and fetters the soul so that it cannot clearly discern and embrace its Lord. But even here I have heard the steadfast assertion, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!'"

"But this martyrdom is not a voluntary one."

"In the sense of self-assumption, I grant that it is not. But when it is borne in faith, submission, and patience, it is in the truest sense voluntary."

"Do you really mean that you have seen suffering thus borne?"

"I do; and repeatedly."

"If left to its own choice, would not the victim prefer ease to suffering?"

"It would not consent to choose. Many of the young persons present have never heard of an experience familiar to some of you, and which I trust I shall be pardoned for describing afresh:

"A friend said to a New England minister, who had been dying by inches for a year, 'I presume it is no longer incredible to you that martyrs should rejoice and praise God in the flames and on the rack?'

"'No,' was the reply, 'I can easily believe it. I have suffered twenty times as much as I could in being burned at the stake, while my joy in God so abounded as to render my sufferings not only tolerable, but welcome.'

"On being asked, at another time, 'Do you feel reconciled?' he replied, 'Oh, that is too cold; I rejoice, I triumph; and this happiness will endure as long as God Himself, for it consists in admiring and adoring Him.'"

"Well, to get such enjoyment, one might almost be willing to endure such suffering. But how is it with mental pain?"

"Here, also, I can produce a favoured witness of the grace of God. When I hear a desolate, childless widow, whose very heart-strings broke when she laid her husband, her only relative, away in his grave, thank God that He thus afflicted her, I do not want to go back to the primitive Church to hear sublime testimony for Christ."

"All this frightens me. I know I never shall have such faith," said Apelles.

"We idealise departed saints," replied Urbané, "and fancy that their faith and love will never be seen again upon earth. But they were made of exactly such flesh and blood as we are; we have exactly the same opportunities they had, to grow up into Christ Jesus."

"But take the average professor of our own day; is he an Apostolic Christian?"

"I fear not. And this fear has led me to open my doors to you, dear friends. Not one of us feels himself so holy as to be satisfied with himself; there is not one of us who may not learn Christ more perfectly than he has done."

"If you can say that, what should we say?" said Apelles.

"I have tried so to hold up Christ in my pulpit," proceeded Urbané, "that you could not help seeing and loving Him. But my descriptions have failed of their end. And now I want to set before you, as a definite object, the duty and privilege of forming a new relation to Him. I will premise that the term *second conversion* is not one that I like, but the experience to which I am now about to call your attention, is one I believe to be genuine, for I have met with cases of just such marked spiritual advance in those who had led lives of previous discomfort and uselessness. Up to a certain point in their religious history, most persons fail to recognise the personality of the Holy Spirit, and thus fall short of some

of the blessings He can and will give plenteously to those who seek them."

"You once used an expression which some of us did not understand," said Antiochus, "when you spoke of having 'consciousness of the Spirit.' Are you now referring to that state?"

"I am not. I am referring to an elevating experience of a life-renovating character. Perhaps the following passage from the lips of that godly woman, Lady Maxwell, will throw light on the term 'consciousness of the Spirit:' 'Yesterday I was favoured with a clear view of the Trinity, which I never had before, and enjoyed fellowship with the Triune God. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and felt my mind fixed in deep contemplation upon that glorious, incomprehensible object, the ever-blessed Trinity. Hitherto I have been wont to view the Holy Ghost chiefly as an agent; now I behold Him distinctly as the third person of the Trinity. I have, in my own soul, an *experimental proof* of this doctrine, but find human language perfectly insufficient for speaking or writing intelligibly on the subject. Eternity alone can unfold the sacred mystery; but in the meantime, what we may, and do, comprehend of it is replete with comfort to the Christian.'"

"But you referred to something more decisive than this experience of Lady Maxwell; did you not?" asked Antiochus.

"I did. God has more than one method in training souls. In some, the divine life is deeply implanted at conversion, and goes on in quiet, constant growth in the

knowledge and love of Christ. But more frequently it is necessary to pass through other processes; especially is this the case with those who are to be the Lord's efficient workmen."

"Have you learned this through study, or through observation?"

"In both ways. Coming in contact with a phenomenon, I sought in the Word of God an explanation, and think I found it in the second chapter of Acts."

"But you surely do not expect to see visible tongues of flame on mortal heads at the present day?" said Hermes.

"By no means; I expect to see diversities of operation, but the same Spirit."

"I should be deeply thankful for any spiritual elevation," said Antiochus earnestly.

"Let me read a passage from Spurgeon that covers this ground:—

"'It is very usual in the life of grace for the soul to receive, in after-years, a second very remarkable visitation of the Holy Spirit, which may be compared to the latter rain. The latter rain was sent to plump out the wheat, and make it full, mature, ready for the after-harvest ripening. So there is a time of special grace granted to saints, to prepare them for glory, to make them completely meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. To some this is given in the form of what has very commonly, and I think correctly, been called a second conversion. There is a point in grace as much above the ordinary Christian, as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling. The life of grace is no dead level. There are mountains and there are valleys. There are tribes of Christians

who live in the valleys, like the poor Swiss of the Valois, who live in the midst of miasma where fever has its lair, and the frame is languid and enfeebled. Such dwellers in the lowlands of unbelief are for ever doubting, fearing, troubled about their interest in Christ, and tossed to and fro; but there are other believers who, by God's grace, have climbed the mountain of full assurance and near communion. Their place is with the eagle in his eyrie, high aloft. They are rejoicing Christians, holy and devout men, doing service for the Master all over the world, and everywhere conquerors through Him that loved them.'"

"But is not this contrary to the analogies of nature?" asked Antiochus. "No child springs miraculously into manhood."

"No doubt the Christian life is progressive. But no one can deny that a soul that has '*received the Holy Ghost*,' is in a more favourable condition for growth than one who has received no such blessing. Take two children of the same age, and put them under different conditions. Give one scanty food and clothing, and the like; give the other the best nourishment, air, &c., possible. Will the development of the one be as rapid and as perfect as that of the other?"

"Are we to understand that you are about to advocate a new doctrine?" asked Hermes. "That you can conceive of a soul as attaining in an hour a spirituality it costs other souls a lifetime to reach?"

"I advocate no new doctrine, but one as old as Christian experience. I appeal to fact only, when I say that there are cases in which a soul suddenly mounts upward as on eagle's wings."

"On what occasion, for instance?"

"The occasions are various. I think, however, that while the blessing sometimes descends upon those who have sought it in a vague, though earnest way, it is the more frequent result of an intelligent belief in it, as a personal experience, and persistent pursuit of it. It is a great mistake to expect all Christians to be alike. Being members of one family, they naturally have features in common; but while the Spirit is one, the diversities are many. Our Lord deals with one soul in this way, and with another in that. When He wants cedars of Lebanon, He can create them, but He does not make His landscape consist solely of cedars. He has His 'willows by the water-courses,' His 'apple-tree among the trees of the wood;' His 'rose of Sharon,' and His 'lily of the valley;' yes, even His 'hyssop on the wall.' And, as Epictetus has said: 'Now had I been a nightingale, I should have sung the songs of a nightingale, or had I been a swan, the songs of a swan; but being a reasonable being, it is my duty to *hymn God.*'"

"Will you tell us how to seek the experience?" asked Antiochus.

"As far as a poor, mortal man, himself needing spiritual elevation, can do it, I will. Believe, in the first place, that it is attainable; that you were never meant to live at a 'poor, dying rate.' Then offer yourself freely to God; keep back nothing. You are not your own; you have been bought with a price. Wait then upon your Lord in intense desire and expectation. Let

me add, wait cheerfully and without discouragement, even if He delays the blessing."

It was time to close the meeting, and it became evident that some souls had been touched, such a spirit of prayer fell upon the kneeling company.

CHAPTER IV.

FALLEN MAN.

"I PROPOSE to speak this evening of fallen man," said Urbané. "When God had created a being in His own image, provided him with a home, a companion, and a profession, we have a picture of an earthly paradise, which, however, soon gives place to the sad spectacle of a Paradise lost. The hand that formed and placed Adam in the garden, on account of his sin 'drove out the man.' And in driving out Adam, He virtually banished the whole human race, dooming man to painful servitude, and woman to painful suffering. The descendants of this guilty pair increased and multiplied and filled the earth. Each was an heir to eternal death, for he was a sinner from his birth, 'every imagination of his heart being evil from his youth.'"

"After reading over the list of crimes imputed to man by inspired writers," said Apelles, "I hesitate to call myself the 'chief of sinners.'"

"We have never been tempted to criminality," said Hermes.

"Our temptations, as Christians," said Urbané, "are

more subtle and keen than those of the worldling. But as we advance in the divine life, sin that once looked trivial assumes gigantic proportions, viewed in the light of God's countenance, and that of a sanctified conscience. There is no virtue in abstaining from forms of vice that never attracted us; nor, indeed, necessarily any grace. Moral men, who yet love not God, keep many of His commandments. Sin in a regenerate soul is not so much outward transgression, as a state of the will. By nature we are inveterate, intense lovers of self; and even after the new birth has, in a degree, crushed this principle of evil, it still exists, latent, perhaps, but potent for mischief, within us."

"I cannot realise that I love myself so intensely," said Apelles.

"And may not for a long time to come; but as you grow in grace you will see it."

"Why," said Apelles, greatly mortified, "do I show it so plainly now?"

"I know nothing about your heart in particular, and did not intend my remark to be considered personal; I merely refer to human nature in general. A man may live years in what appears to be a consecrated life, happy and useful, and then, through Divine illumination, find that he is in the most urgent need of new anointing from on high; in unsuspected, remote recesses of his soul a monster has been lurking, that has now been dragged as a traitor to the light; and till that traitor is slain, always will be on hand to let Satan into the very temple of the Holy Ghost."

"And even a slight degree of unbelief in a soul Christ has redeemed, is sin—sin to hate," said Claudia.

"I have never been taught that. I commit so many outward sins, that I have not time to look much within," said Apelles.

"It is better to look up than to look in," said Urbané. "You never will find anything in yourself that, on scrutiny, will not prove to be tinged with sin."

"But I do not recognise myself as the utterly barbarous character depicted in the Bible. I am not, for instance, 'without natural affection,' nor was it ever a delight to me to 'cause men to fall.'"

"Man is largely depicted in the Word as he exists even to this day in heathen lands. We do not expect to find this absolute degradation in the realms of Christian nurture. We were all born in a land of Sabbaths, of Bibles, of holy influences and prayer. It would be fearful, indeed, if we should sink from such heights of privileges into depths of brutality. But while we look with profound pity upon the carnality of the lower forms of manhood, we must consider the responsibility resting upon us because of what has been done for us. God speaks of sin as the abominable thing He hates. Through the force of education we have been kept from temptation to crime, but our transgressions against the law have been as numerous as the hairs of our heads."

"Are not persons whose natural characters are very lovely, in danger of being blind to what defects they do possess?" asked Apelles.

"If their sense of sin grew out of what they see of its

outward forms in their own lives, they might over-estimate themselves, no doubt. Thus the young ruler whom Jesus loved, and who had kept the law from his youth up, was not an heir of eternal life. Morality could not win heaven for him; Christ's love even could not save him; the penitent thief on the cross might be to him an object of envy."

"The thought is appalling," said Antiochus.

"It shows what a fearful sin unbelief is in the eye of God," said Philologus.

"Yes," said Urbané. "If the young ruler had been able to exercise faith enough to go and sell all he had and give it to the poor, saving faith would, undoubtedly, have followed. But I was going to say that one does not learn his own utter sinfulness by his own skill. The Spirit gradually opens his eyes to see forms of self-love that are absolutely loathsome in the Divine eye, while he is comfortably fair in his own."

"How can God love what He loathes?" asked Apelles.

"He loves the sinner, while He hates his sin."

"Should not man, then, hate what God hates in him?"

"He should, and every good man does. As he contemplates and studies Christ, sin looks more and more monstrous; what seemed a peccadillo yesterday, may look like a dark mountain to-morrow."

"I dare say the thought I am going to express will strike you as a very crude one; but it seems hard, to me, that the young ruler's beautiful moral character

could do so little for him. Take him, and any number of innocent, lovely girls, such as are found adorning homes all over the world, and is there not something revolting in the thought of their spending eternity with such wretches as we know to be now on earth?"

"There is great temptation to rank filial piety and amiable instincts under the head of piety towards God," replied Urbané. "But we must not join together what He has sundered. He has provided a way by which the vilest sinner may be justified; it is a way of humiliation and penitence, but every son and daughter of Adam must walk therein."

"Well, do you think God hates my sweet little sister here, who would not hurt a fly, as He does a great hulking reprobate, who would crush her life out of her for a few dollars?"

"Let me repeat it, God hates no man. If you study His character, you will see that it is impossible. And we have just alluded to the fact that Christ 'loved' the young ruler. And now as to those to whom you have referred, I agree with you perfectly, that the ideal young girl is like a lily in her purity. But my experience as a pastor is this: It is this very lily, that when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon it, shudders, and complains of a little dust upon its bosom, that your 'great, hulking reprobate' would not even be able to see. I have seen many a penitential tear shed by maidens whose tenderness of conscience many men, even sanctified men, might envy; I appeal to Claudia if I reverence her sex too much?"

"I agree with you perfectly," was the reply; "at the same time, I am painfully conscious of the weak side of my sex."

"Better weak than sinful," said Philologus.

"But have you not repeatedly declared, in the pulpit," Apelles said to Urbané, "that we may expect deliverance from sin because we have God's omnipotence at our command?"

"Yes."

"Then why does He not at once put an end to sin? Can He not?"

"He can. And He could doubtless have prevented sin from entering the world, had He chosen to do so."

"But if He can keep a soul free from sin, and will not, how is that soul responsible?"

"God has provided a refuge for the sin-sick soul in Christ."

"But sin still goes on."

"And still the sun shines and men stand with their backs to it, and see shadows."

"Well, let me ask another question. You say that God's omnipotence is at our disposal; is His omniscience also at our service?"

"Undoubtedly it is. He gives us all the light we ask for, or are willing to receive."

"Then we are responsible for our mistakes?"

"Certainly."

"This is news to me," said Hermes. "I always regarded myself as innocent in my errors of judgment."

"Form a habit of self-distrust, and a habit of faith in

the unerring sagacity of God, and you will never go very far astray. I say, form this as a habit. Religion does not consist in emotions. It is a life, and has its laws, as all life has."

"But it is very hard," said a youthful voice, "to keep one's resolutions. While I am hearing you preach or talk, I always determine to follow all your suggestions; but the first temptation carries me away."

"I hope you will learn to make no resolutions," said Urbané, "unless it be to let Christ do all for you. In yourself, you can neither do nor be anything."

"It is tolerably easy to be religious on Sundays, and when with good people, or when one is in trouble," said another; "but when one is out in society, and with those who are worldly, and when one is on the top of the wave, it is another thing."

"Do you think one could be in good health whose heart beat once a week, and lay idle the rest of the time?" asked Urbané.

"Why, no!" was the surprised answer.

"And what of yours on week-days and when in the world? My dear young friend, Christ wants no spasmodic, fluctuating love from you. He wants a heart beating like clock-work for Him, no matter where it is. And now let us stop talking for to-night, and spend the remainder of the evening in prayer."

CHAPTER V.

SIN.

"I HAVE been requested to go on speaking of sin," said Urbané.

"Some persons believe that sinless perfection is attainable here upon earth," said Hermes.

"This is the Wesleyan doctrine," said Apelles.

"Wesley used the word perfection," replied Urbané; "but he did not mean sinlessness by that term. A short time before his death, he alluded to an illness he had had at Bristol, when he had used these words:

> 'I the chief of sinners am,
> But Jesus died for me!'

He was asked: 'Is that your language now?' 'Yes,' said he, 'Christ is all! He is all.'

"And what can be more scriptural than the Wesleyan answers to the following questions:

"'Do you affirm that perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes?'

"'We constantly affirm just the contrary.'

"'In what manner would you advise those who think they have attained, to speak of their own experience?'

"'With great wariness, and with the deepest humility and self-abasement before God.'

"This is not, indeed, the language of Wesley himself, but that of his followers, as taught by him. But the sentiments I will now quote are his own:

"'Absolute or infallible perfection I never contended for: sinless perfection I do not contend for, seeing it is not scriptural. A perfection such as enables a person to fulfil the whole law, and so need not the merits of Christ, I do not acknowledge. I do now, and always did, protest against it.'

"'Keep to this: repentance towards God, faith in Christ, holiness of heart and life, a growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, the continual need of His atoning blood, a constant confidence in Him, and all these every moment, to our life's end.'

"'As long as the soul is connected with the body, it cannot think but by the help of bodily organs. As long as these organs are imperfect, we shall be liable to *mistakes*, both speculative and *practical*. For all these we need the atoning blood, as, indeed, for every defect or omission. Therefore, all men have need to say daily, *forgive us our trespasses*.'

"'As to the manner, I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by faith, by a simple act of faith; consequently, in an instant. But I believe in a gradual work both preceding and following that instant.'

"'As to the time, I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves

the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before death.'

"'I believe it is usually years after justification; but that it *may be* within five years or five months after it.'

"The views of Mr Charles Wesley on the subject of perfection underwent a change, in consequence of the extravagance and pride of which he was a distressed witness. He did not, from this time, contend, as do many, for the necessary continuance of indwelling sin till death; but he spoke of Christian perfection as a much higher attainment than either he or his brother had previously regarded it. In his estimation, it is not to be attained by a present act of faith in the mercy, truth, and power of God, but is rather the result of severe discipline, comprehending affliction, temptation, long-continued labour, and the persevering exercise of faith in seasons of spiritual darkness, when the heart is wrung with bitter anguish. By this painful and lingering process, he believed that the death of the 'old man' is effected, and a maturity is given to all the graces of the Christian character. Hence, he condemned 'the witnesses,' as he called them; that is, the persons who testified of the time and manner in which they were delivered from the root of sin, and made perfect in love, regarding them as self-deceived."

"And with which of the brothers Wesley do you agree?" asked Apelles.

"I agree with both. I think the operations of the Spirit so diverse, that I can believe in theories that appear contrary to each other. There are flexible,

docile natures, like that of Matthew—the moment they are called to Christ, they arise and follow Him. Others, like Paul, have to be virtually crucified before they will wholly yield up their belligerent wills. These remarks apply to both the regenerate and the unregenerate."

"Do you think those born and brought up in the Church of Christ *can* be very great sinners?"

"Bishop Hall says: 'I brought sin enough with me into the world to repent of all my life, though I should never actually sin;' and that 'not only commission makes sin. A man is guilty of all those sins he hateth not.' In judging of our own sinfulness, we must take into account the light we have received. A man's conscience may become so sanctified that he will rank speaking evil of his brother with doing him evil. He will just as soon make remarks as to his defects, as he will tell falsehoods to dishonour, or take a knife to slay him."

"Oh! do you believe in such perfection?" cried an incredulous voice.

"It is a sort of perfection taught by our Lord, when He says, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' And this spirit of Christian charity is just what I want you all to possess. You will see a great deal to condemn in even good people; even good people may honestly doubt religious theories which are your delight. But if they see that your theory is one thing and your life another, they will have just cause to distrust you. And let me say here, that love to man is the inevitable

result of love to Christ; and if you find it wanting in yourselves, depend upon it your religion is vain."

"You frighten me!" said Amplias. "I think it would be beautiful to learn to exercise perfect charity; but the nearest approach I have ever made to that, or any form of godliness, is earnestly to desire it."

"Thank God for this earnest desire! Has He not said, '*Blessed* are they that hunger'? But let me proceed to read to you passages from other than Methodist writers. The first is from the pen of a godly old divine of the Church of England, in a sermon on Legal and Evangelical Faith: 'St Paul speaks of *the law of the spirit of life*, which was able to destroy the power of sin, and to introduce such a spiritual and heavenly frame of soul into men, as whereby they might be enabled to express a cheerful compliance with the law of God, and demonstrate a true heavenly conversation and godlike life in this world.'

"We read in Jamblicus and others, of the many preparatory experiments used by Pythagoras to try his scholars, whether they were fit to receive the more sublime and sacred pieces of his philosophy; and that he was wont to communicate these only to souls in a due degree purified and prepared for such doctrine. And what did all this signify but only this, that he might, by all these methods, work and mould the minds of his hearers into such a fit temper as that he might better stamp the seal of his more divine doctrine upon them, and that his discourses to them 'of things just and lovely and good,' might be written 'truly and really

in the soul;' that I may use Plato's words in his Phædrus, where he commends the impressions of truth which are made upon men's souls above all outward writings, which he therefore compares to dead pictures. By this we see what the wisest and best philosophers thought of this internal writing; but it peculiarly belongs to God to write the laws of goodness in the tables of men's hearts. All the outward teachings of men are but dead things in themselves. But God's imprinting His mind and will upon men's hearts is properly that which is called the teaching of God, and then they become living laws, written in the living tables of men's hearts, fitted to receive and retain divine impressions.

"After alluding to the fact, 'that a faith whose characteristic spirit is eternal aspiration, should be more or less a sorrowing faith,' and of 'the spirit of courage and liberty,' a popular living author proceeds to say: 'Nevertheless, friends, Christians, in whom this spirit is begun, you know there is a bound where all this dissatisfaction and unrest ought to end. Beyond that limit it becomes a hindrance to Christian growth, a fetter upon Christian liberty, a chill upon Christian zeal. Instead of inspiriting, it debilitates. By an easy and dangerous transition, it passes into a morbid self-accusation, which shuts off charity for men and service to Christ. It becomes a practical denial of the supporting strength and pledged grace of God. There can be little freedom, or heartiness, or efficiency in the worship or the living, under this overshadowing anxiety. Better far, always, than indifference or unconcern, it is not the natural, healthy

state of a disciple. If it is an inevitable stage on the way to that state, yet it should always be treated as just that, and no more—temporary, instrumental, immature; tending ever to peace; looking for the joy of believing; waiting for the promise of the Comforter; pressing on, with confident expectation, from the transient 'spirit of bondage to fear,' which asks, 'Who shall deliver me?' into the abiding 'spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' where 'there is no condemnation,' and into the blessed spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father;' 'if God be for us, who can be against us?'

"And now let me read Leighton's comment on Paul's utterances in the eighth chapter of Romans:—

"'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? etc.

"'Is this he who so lately cried out, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? who now triumphs, O happy man! who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

"'Yes, it is the same. Pained, then, with the thoughts of that miserable conjunction with a body of death, and so crying out, who will deliver, who will separate me from that? Now, now he hath found a Deliverer to do that for him, to whom he is for ever united, and he glories in his inseparable union, and unalterable love, which none can divide him from. Yea, it is through Him, that presently, after that word of complaint, he praises God; and now, in Him he triumphs. So vast a difference is there betwixt a Christian taken in himself,

and in Christ! When he views himself in himself, then he is nothing but a poor, miserable, polluted, perishing wretch; but then he looks again, and sees himself in Christ, and then he is rich, and safe, and happy; he triumphs, and he glories in it, above all the painted prosperities, and against all the horrid adversities, of the world; he lives in his Christ, content and happy, and laughs at all enemies.'

"Now no one can deny that God has made every possible provision for the happiness as well as safety of His children. Is it, then, conceivable that He has provided no means whereby the souls of the redeemed may be freed from anxiety, from an 'evil conscience,' from the power of sin? I believe He has. But how far man has availed, or is availing himself of this, I am not prepared to say. But that thousands live a life of faith that is the source of great purity and peace, I am quite sure. Bishop Burnet says of Leighton: 'I can say with great truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him, for above two and twenty years, I never knew him to say an idle word, or one that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any other temper, but that which I wished to be in in the last moments of my life.' And Wesley says of Fletcher: 'I was intimately acquainted with him for above thirty years; I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles; and, in all that time, never heard him speak one improper word, nor saw him do an improper action. Many exemplary men have I known, holy in

heart and life, within fourscore years; but one equal to him I have not known, one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God. So unblameable a character in every respect, I have not found, either in Europe or America; and I scarce expect to find such another on this side of eternity.'

"'Such was the piety of our Eliot,' says Cotton Mather, 'that, like another Moses, he had upon his face a continual shine, arising from his uninterrupted communion with the Father of Spirits. He was, indeed, a man of prayer, and might say, after the Psalmist, I Prayer, as being in a manner made up of it. Could the walls of his old study speak, they would even ravish us with a relation of the many hundred and thousand fervent prayers which he there poured out before the Lord.'

"And again: 'Eliot's way of preaching was very plain, so that the very lambs might wade into his discourses on those texts and themes, wherein elephants might swim.'

"'The Lord Jesus Christ was the loadstone which gave a touch to all the sermons of our Eliot; a glorious, precious, lovely Christ was the point of Heaven which they still verged unto.'"

"But these men would not have spoken thus of themselves," said Claudia.

"You are right. If they speak of themselves at all, they declare themselves to be unprofitable servants. I have a case in point in Eliot himself. On his death-bed, he spoke of the work he had been doing for Christ, but immediately exclaimed, 'But what was the word I spoke

last? I recall that word—*my doings!* Alas! they have been poor and small and low doings; and I'll be the man that shall throw the first stone at them.'

"Now, if such humility as this does not keep full pace with claims to holiness, reject the claims. The very essence and genius of sanctity is lowliness of mind, and the esteeming others better than ourselves. If sometimes we are permitted to sit with the Lord in His chariot, let fast runners go by its side, announcing to all on the highway that it was not our virtue, but His condescension that placed us there."

"But if one attains great dominion over sin, and receives great marks of divine favour, is there not danger of spiritual pride?" asked Apelles.

"'He whom the Lord loads most with His gifts, stoops lowest, as pressed down by them,'" replied Urbané. "I forget who said that, but I am sure we have all seen instances that attest its truth."

"But we do see spiritual pride," Apelles persisted.

"Yes; but not in those 'most loaded.' You can easily agitate the water in a bottle partially filled; but when it is as full as it can hold, you cannot agitate it at all."

"This image explains, too, the equanimity of some Christians in time of trouble," said Claudia. "They are so full of Christ that they are shaken in vain."

"If the question is not irrelevant," said Hermes, "I should like to ask your opinion of fasting. Is it still a Christian duty? Does it help to mortify the flesh?"

"I have read an ingenious article on this subject, which

takes the ground, that while the Bridegroom is with them, the children of the bride-chamber cannot mourn, but that when He is taken away, 'then shall they fast in those days.' Others deny that He ever is taken away, Christ's words to the contrary, notwithstanding. We shall have occasion to recur to this point. There are many persons, in our day, who have not physical strength to abstain entirely from food for any length of time; devotion is checked by the train of discomforts that attend this attempt to rise above mortality. To such, that style of fast is inexpedient. There is no virtue in making one's self ill. On the other hand, it has been remarked by a medical writer of the present day, that if the fasts enjoined by one body of the Church were practised by all, the physical effect might be salutary. That a vast amount of Christian moderation in the use of food and drinks is called for most imperatively, I have no doubt. But under the general head of 'fasting,' I think we may rank all forms of self-denial, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual; their name is legion. Religion lays a gentle but firm hand on everything in the natural man, and not only upon that which is in itself sinful, but on much that is in itself innocent. As the conscience becomes sanctified, that which it allowed itself yesterday it forbids itself to-day. Self-denial is not agreeable to man, but it may become a second nature. The Christian learns to control his passions, to bridle his tongue, to refuse himself enervating pleasures, to keep himself, in many respects, 'under.' This wise self-discipline helps to conform him to His image, whose own life of sac-

rifice speaks more sternly to His disciples than His severest words."

"But it is very hard," said Apelles, "to know just where to draw the line. I know you do not want us to live like anchorites. And you have taught some of us, at least, to beautify our homes with works of art, with flowers, with music; to catch, with joyful, grateful hands, at every lovely creation of the Maker of the universe He throws in our way."

"You are right: I have tried to teach this. But have I ever suggested, in practice or precept, that you should adorn your homes *too much;* love flowers *too much;* be *too* fond of the works of nature in their varied forms? Not one of you can be an example or a law-giver to another. A very little upsets one man's reason, while it takes a great deal to unsettle that of his neighbour; they must live, therefore, by different rules."

"But can you make no practical suggestion?" asked Amplias.

"I think I can. As long as the gratification of any innocent taste does not absorb time that could and should be better spent; as long as you can return to religious duty or religious devotion, with unchecked delight; as long as Christ holds so unmistakeably His place as King of your soul, that you count all your treasures but loss that you may keep Him there,—so long you are safe in your human pursuits and pleasures. But if these things, innocent in themselves, have the boldness and impertinence to beguile you from duty, from prayer, from Christ; to you they cease to be inno-

cent. They are thieves, and robbers, and murderers; they will steal your most priceless treasures and slay your soul."

"And what is one to do in such a case?"

"What would a man do to thieves and robbers? He would not tolerate them a moment."

"You preach great perfection," said Amplias with a sigh.

"So will every man who preaches Christ."

"But to live to Christ is so hard, if one accepts your view of it."

"My dear young friend, I did not make the way to Christ. The plan is His. And He does not hesitate to say that the path is narrow, and that few find it. But if it is narrow, it is comparatively short; and eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things that God has prepared for those that love Him. There come times, in every earnest life, when the right hand must come off, the right eye come out. This is, indeed, a fast! If, at this moment, there is any one present who is tempted to give the world, in any shape, another trial, let me entreat him to relinquish the attempt. Profit by the experience of an old man, who cares for your souls. Christ is the one, the only Fountain, from which you will never come staggering back, crying with bitter anguish, 'I thirst!'"

Ah, what a timely word was that to more than one! It was an iron hand that crushed what looked like a fair flower into a shapeless, odious mass; it was the heel that ground into the dust a guilty pleasure! There was silence in the room for several minutes.

Apelles then said: "You once alluded to Christ's saying that there are times when the Bridegroom forsakes the bride. Now, some persons deny that Christ ever withdraws His presence from the soul; but complaint that He does this is as old as the Church."

"I do not believe that He ever leaves the soul arbitrarily; but that some of His most beloved ones have missed His conscious presence at times in their history, is a fact not to be ignored. And as to the suffering this occasions, the testimony is that it is heartrending—far more so than any other bereavement."

"Madame Guyon," said Philologus, "suffered under this affliction for nearly seven years."

"Her case can hardly be called a representative one, however. God was preparing her to do a great work for the Church, and I think He rarely, if ever, makes the educating process a painless one when He wants remarkable results. 'He that goeth forth and *weepeth*, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' This wonderful mystic brought much wheat into the Lord's garner, but it cost her a great price."

"You do not think, then, that it is necessary for every Christian to pass through a period, or periods, of spiritual desertion and darkness?"

"I certainly do not. If we are in darkness, it is most commonly through some folly or sin of our own; the sun is in the sky, but we cannot see it with our eyes shut, or if we turn our backs to it, or interpose some object between it and our vision."

"Do you mean that Christ is always in a position to be seen and appropriated?"

"Yes; by what old divines called 'appropriating faith.' But it is time to bring our meeting to a close, when, as usual, I have done little more than touch at truth."

"Before we close," said Philologus, "permit me to read the description of an encounter between Wesley, at the age of fourscore, and Simeon, then a young parson of twenty-eight: 'Sir,' said young Simeon, 'I understand you are called an Arminian; now I am sometimes called a Calvinist, and, therefore, I suppose we are to draw daggers. But, before I begin to combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions, not from impertinent curiosity, but for real instruction. Pray, sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not put it into your heart?'

"'Yes,' said the veteran, 'I do, indeed.'

"'And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything that you can do, and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?'

"'Yes, solely through Christ.'

"'But, sir, supposing you were *first* saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your good works?'

"'No; I must be saved by Christ, from first to last.'

"'Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the

grace of God, are you not, in some way or other, to keep yourself by your own power?"

"'No.'

"'What then? are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?'

"'Yes, altogether.'

"'And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom?'

"'Yes, I have no hope but in Him.'

"'Then, sir, with your leave, I will put up my dagger again: for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification, my final perseverance. It is, in substance, all that I hold, and as I hold it; and, therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things where we agree.'"

"I do wish," said Apelles, "that I could believe, as some do, that sanctification is ever bestowed as a sudden gift."

"The word '*sanctification*' means different things on different lips," said Urbané. "No one pretends to become a full-grown saint in an instant of time. I believe all experienced believers regard Christian life as a growth, even where a sudden 'sanctification of the Spirit' has been vouchsafed. But it is not wise to argue about this subject. Let us, instead of doing that, spend our strength in finding out, practically, and each one for himself, how holy God can, or does, make an individual soul here in time. The question is one

of experience, and no amount of argument can settle it."

"I think," said Hermes, "it is simple presumption to expect to be holy in this life."

"Some men pretend that they are. They declare themselves to be perfect," said Apellas.

"But as we do not consider ourselves perfect, we must try to avoid discussing a subject so subtle, so difficult, till some future time, at least," said Urbané.

"Before I will allow that any human being is perfect, I want, as Lavater says, to divide an inheritance with him," said Hermes.

"Or, as has been elsewhere remarked, take a long journey with him," said Apelles.

CHAPTER VI.

TEMPTATION.

HAVING announced his subject, Urbané waited for questions.

"Is it not very difficult to distinguish between sin and sinless temptation?" was asked.

"It is; but do not chide yourself too severely for being tempted. You are not responsible for it till you yield."

"I do chide myself; I cannot help it."

"Then you undertake to manage both Satan's sins and your own. And let me tell you, you will have quite trial enough with your own share. You little know as yet the deceitfulness and instability of your own heart; it takes time to learn its windings and turnings."

"Is there any time when Satan makes special assaults?" asked Apelles.

"Leighton says that 'Especially after a time of some special seasons of grace, and some special new supplies of grace, Satan will set on most eagerly, when he knows of the richest booty. The pirates that let the ships pass as they go by empty, watch them well when they

return richly laden; so doth this great pirate. Did he not assault our Saviour straight after His baptism?' You cannot lay this habit of Satan too much to heart, or be too careful to keep the divine Pilot on board your ship when it is coming home laden with treasures."

"Well, I *hate* Satan. Now you call my attention to it, I see that it is a fact, that I almost invariably fall into my easily-besetting sin after some special delight in the closet, or in sitting at the sacramental table; but I never charged this to Satan," said Apelles.

"Yet you do not doubt that he is a personality, and always raging with hunger for souls?"

"I have never thought much about it."

"He will give you occasion then to think about it, I assure you. The closer your union to Christ, the more adroit and persistent will Satan become. He is not omniscient; he does not know that Christ is shortly going to bruise him under His right royal feet; and so he keeps up his attempts to get possession of redeemed souls that will never be his."

"Can you tell us exactly what to do when tempted?"

"'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.'"

"Suppose the temptation looks attractive?"

"Christian said that at such times his annoyance was vanquished by remembrance of what he saw on the cross."

"Oh, but in moments of sharp temptation the power of the cross is weakened."

"True; but this is our only hope. Let me repeat to

you the history of one temptation, as described to me by the victim. Satan transformed himself into an angel of light at the end of a year in which a man had been living very close to Christ, and said to him in a quiet, rather than a startling way :

"'Here is a delicious draught; drink it.'

"'Is it innocent?'

"'Of course it is.'

"The man's habits were cautious, as are those of every true disciple, and he hesitated.

"'Innocence is relative,' he said; 'and this cup may not be innocent for me. Are you sure that I should not lose my good name, and so dishonour my Master, by drinking it?'

"'Oh,' said Satan, 'a good name is nothing to a man so thirsty as you are.'

"'I am very thirsty. But would my friends approve of this draught?'

"'What you want, at this moment, is not friends. It is relief from thirst. Drink.'

"'Are you sure it would not cost me Christ?

"'Drink a little, and see that it will cost you nothing worth having.'

"The man took the cup in his hand, and looked at it. He put it to his lips, and one drop fell upon his tongue; it intoxicated him; he forgot reputation, friends, duty. He was about to swallow the whole sweet draught; but the sacred name of Christ had been uttered, and He had come to the rescue.

"'My son,' He said, 'drink this cup, and you will

never see Me more; for a transient, guilty pleasure, will you deny and forsake Me?'

"'Nay, Lord!' he cried, clinging to his Beloved like a drowning man; 'I would give up reputation, position, friends—yea, every earthly advantage, to drink this cup to its dregs; but I cannot, I will not, let Thee go!'

"Thus saying, he dashed the cup from his hand, and Satan withdrew, baffled, but not hopeless; for he knows that one who will stop to parley is in danger."

"Is there sin in thus parleying?" asked Hermes.

"There is. It is giving place to the devil."

"Well, suppose the young man, above described, yields to temptation, and drinks the cup; what then?"

"He crucifies the Son of God afresh, and wrongs his own soul. He chooses self-indulgence and rejects Christ. Sin will separate him from his Lord. He will keep on falling from one transgression into another, till he wakes up to find himself in an abyss, into which he once would have declared it impossible he could descend."

"And how about his religious life during this process?"

"It will be a source of reproach and discomfort, and when he comes to himself, as he will, if he is a regenerate man, his conscience will become a lash to beat him withal. He will hardly need any other punishment than this, combined with the loss of what he had, perhaps, enjoyed of the presence of Christ."

"It is a painful picture. 'Lord, lead us not into

temptation.' Could not a merciful Father shield His children from the assaults of Satan?"

"Nothing is too hard for God. Why He *permits* temptation, I do not fully know. But it has its uses. It reveals a man's inmost soul, of what sort it is; and whether it will honour or dishonour Him. In the case I have supposed, which is not an extreme one, as you will see on reflection, no power less potent than an intense love to Christ, can save the man. He has become so deluded by Satan, that he will give up everything else he values. But that passion conquers the two great embodiments of evil, Satan and self. And he who has thus come off conquerer may, in time, rejoice that his love has had such a test, grievous and mortifying as the temptation was at the moment. Temptation, when it is not followed by defeat, strengthens Christian life, and creates confidence in God. He who has fought many battles, has acquired an experience worth years of mere sunny idling by the wayside."

"Which has severest conflicts—the old or the young Christian?" asked Apelles.

"The holier a soul has become, the more frantic are the efforts of Satan to despoil and secure it. The conflict becomes close—yea, hand-to-hand. But the joy of the victor, when the encounter is over, will make him forget the wounds of the affray."

"All this recalls the expression, 'there *remaineth* a rest for the people of God.' It is evident that there is not much rest for us here."

"I hope to show you that there is a great deal.

Meanwhile, try to realise that while Christ may seem afar off, He is in truth always near the faithful soul, and will not suffer it to be tempted without making provision for its rescue. Sometimes, when Satan sees believers to be so closely united to Christ that he loses all hope of separating them, he relieves his anger by harassing them in ingenious ways, that would never occur to any less malignant mind than his own. But in this case, the work is purely Satanic, and no human responsibility is involved."

"But if he attacks an advanced Christian more furiously than a less experienced one, what advantage has the former over the latter?"

"The advantage of having Christ so abiding in him, that he counts all things but loss for His sake. What can Satan offer a soul that can say this? He only insults it when he suggests that some other object may be put in Christ's place."

"He goes armed with very subtle weapons, which he will thrust into minute crevices in the Christian armour," said Claudia. "They penetrate like long, sharp needles, whose points have been dipped in poison. It is these almost invisible shafts that do the greatest harm, for they usually come when one is off one's guard. When battering-rams are shoved against the soul, it takes the alarm at once; but these fine, fiery darts! We recognise them first by their sting."

"And let them teach us," said Urbané, "the absolute *need* of a Christ within us, to check instantly the effects of the poison thus introduced. Our only hope is in

Him. Without Him we are helpless, and may be plucked from the very entrance to heaven itself.

> "'Mount, but be sober on the wing;
> Mount up, for heaven is won by prayer:
> Be sober, for thou art not there.'"

"Perhaps your attention," said Philologus, "should be called to the fact that there are some temptations that ought not to be fought. The sin is kept too constantly before the imagination, when faced; you must retire from the field, and let the Captain of your salvation do battle for you."

"Will He do it?" asked Apelles.

"If you trust your cause entirely in His hand, He will," said Urbané.

"You have spoken," said Hermes, "of Satanic temptations; do we not also tempt ourselves? Is the fault all his?"

"You never lose your moral responsibility, and you have two tempters in addition to Satan—namely, the World and the Flesh. That their power is immense, no one can doubt who knows anything of himself."

"And how are we to meet them?"

"In humility and patience, and faith and prayer. We must accept the fact that we are weak and human, liable to fall into both folly and sin. On the other hand, we must remember that Christ *abides* in us, and, however distant to our consciousness, is always within reach of a whisper, or even a glance of appeal. And if He does not instantly appear for our rescue, it does not

become us to lose courage, and sink down in despair; He will not suffer us to go to ruin."

"But, now, look at David. How low he fell!"

"And how he repented! Suppose all the saints in Scripture had been represented as sinless: how would the weak brother of all succeeding time have bemoaned and sunk under his own imperfections! One of God's plans for the human race is to strip it bare of pride and vainglory, and in carrying out this plan, He often finds it necessary to permit grievous temptation—sometimes a fall. Self-knowledge is impossible, when the sea is smooth, the sky cloudless, the wind fair; in this estate, man says: 'I shall never be moved.' But if, when the storm of temptation arises, he can say this, happy is he that is in such a case."

"Can any say this?" asked Apelles eagerly.

"There are those who say they are never moved, but they have not come to the end of life; they do not know what may yet befall them. Patient distrust of self, and cheerful trust in Christ, seem to me to be wiser."

"I think there is another reason why temptation is permitted," said Claudia. "In all times the Church must suffer persecution; and, as in our own day it is not pushed to the point of martyrdom, the accuser of the brethren becomes their persecutor, and the 'fiery trial,' sooner or later, is felt most keenly by the purest soul. The whiter it has been washed in atoning blood, the more it suffers under the harassing and intrusive attempt to overcome it. But 'blessed are they who

are persecuted for righteousness' sake,' by either man or devil; they shall come out of this tribulation like an army with banners!"

"One word more, before we part," said Urbané. "Make allowance for infirmities of the flesh, which are purely physical. To be fatigued, body and soul, is not sin; to be 'in heaviness' is not sin; to be sometimes languid in holy affection may not be sin, but mere lassitude of the emotive nature in all directions. Christian life is not a feeling; it is a principle: when your hearts will not *fly*, let them *go*, and if they 'will neither fly nor go,' be sorry for them and patient with them, and take them to Christ, as you would carry your little lame child to a tender-hearted, skilful surgeon. Does the surgeon, in such a case, upbraid the child for being lame?"

"You hold up such a high standard of piety," said Claudia, "that that soothing word is quite refreshing."

"It is, indeed!" said Apelles. "I have so many lame children!"

"The effect of this evening upon me," said Amplias, "has been depressing. I never realised before that we had so powerful an enemy in Satan."

"It is because he is so powerful that I am anxious to have the fight with self over, that you may be at full liberty to fight Satan. We must realise the fact that we are altogether born in sin, and that our human weakness and inability to help ourselves is absolute; but this is only one side of the story, and to dwell upon it exclusively is ruinous. It is far better to cast our-

selves on Christ, in His power over the whole realm of evil, assured that He is our King as well as our Saviour, and will for ever do away with everything that hinders the coming of His kingdom."

"But in the meantime we have got to have our hard times."

"We too often make our own hard times, by our unbelief and slowness of heart."

"I will now close our meeting by reading a passage on this subject from a far more masterly hand than mine: 'But how are we to overcome temptation? Cheerfulness is the first thing, cheerfulness is the second, cheerfulness the third. The devil is chained. He can bark, but he cannot bite, unless we go up to him and let him do so. We must be of good courage. The power of temptation is in the fainting of our hearts. We must have confidence in God. No one can have confidence in God who has not the completest diffidence of himself. God's cause is ours; for temptation is more really the devil's wrath against God, who has punished him, than against us, whom he only envies. Our ruin is important to him, only as it is a blow (aimed) at God's glory. Thus God is bound to us, as it were, as it is for His sake that we are thus persecuted. We may be sure—indeed, we know infallibly, that we shall never be tried beyond our strength.'"

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYSTICS.

As Claudia was about to set forth to attend the next meeting, and Antiochus seemed disposed to accompany her, his wife said to him, playfully, "Why do you and mother never take me with you?"

"I wanted the proposal to come from yourself, dear Junia," replied her mother.

"You know how I feel about it," said Antiochus; "but I fancied you were indisposed to go."

"Are you going to let them try to make you perfect?" asked Junia.

"To whom do you refer by 'them?'"

"Why, Urbané and his set."

"No such demonstration has been made thus far," said Antiochus; "and I think it more than likely that you would be interested in the subject to-night. Your mother says Urbané is going to speak of the Mystics."

"The Mystics? What have they to do with the Bible?"

"Come and see."

"I will. But don't expect to make a Mystic of me. I am a live woman, made of flesh and blood, and I rather

think, Mr Antiochus, that you would prefer, in the long run, to have a wife who will keep your house and mind your children, than one of your devotees, who neglects home duties to run about singing and praying."

"I certainly should," was the reply.

Junia had been a very beautiful girl, and was now a beautiful young woman. She did not, in the strictest sense, live in the world; Christian profession forbade it. But what service she rendered Christ was in the form of duty, not love; her great, passionate heart she gave to her husband and children, and she wanted theirs in return. Her taste was unusually refined; she shrank from everything that was not beautiful and fragrant; she craved artistic objects, and filled her house with them. She would not have liked to be called aristocratic; yet her instinctive repugnance to all that was homely and prosaic made her seem so, at least.

As to Antiochus, she idolised him; her ardent imagination clothed him with fancied graces; hitherto she had led him whithersoever she would, by the silken thread of her affections.

Urbané received her warmly, and she took her seat between her husband and mother, and as far as possible from two or three worthy but plain people, who, being poor, had something beside the odour of sanctity about them.

"I wish to devote this evening to the Mystics," said Urbané.

"Who are they?" asked Hermes.

"They are men and women known to every age of the

Church, who usually make their way through the world completely misunderstood by their fellow-men. Their very virtues sometimes appear to be vices. They are often the scorn and contempt of their time, and are even persecuted and thrown into prison by those who think they thus do our Lord service. But now and then one arises who sees, or thinks he sees, some clue to their lives and their speech. Though not of them, he feels a mysterious kinship to them, that makes him shrink with pain when he hears them spoken of unjustly. Now, I happen to be such a man. I have not built up any pet theory that I want to sustain; I am not, in any way, bound to fight for any school; but I should be most ungrateful to both God and man if I did not acknowledge that I owe much of the sum and substance of the best part of my life to mystical writers, ay, and mystical thinkers, whom I know in the flesh."

"But how? Can error teach truth?" asked Hermes.

"I will reply in the language of another: 'Suppose you wished to separate a quantity of brass and steel filings mixed together in one vessel, how would you effect this separation? Apply a loadstone, and immediately every particle of iron will attach itself to it, while the brass remains behind. Thus, if we see a company of true and false professors of religion together, we may not be able to distinguish between them; but let Christ come among them, and all His sincere followers will be attracted toward Him, as the steel is attracted to the magnet, while those who have none of His Spirit will remain at a distance.' Now, I try to use this test. I

use Christ as a magnet, and say to all who cleave to Him, even when I cannot perfectly agree with them on every point of doctrine—You love Christ, therefore I love you."

"And you are right," said Philologus.

"I think you will all be interested in a passage from Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria,' which is just to the point."

"From Coleridge? I am all ear, for one," said Philologus.

"He had made allusion to George Fox, Jacob Behmen, and the like, and adds: 'The feeling of gratitude which I cherish towards these men has caused me to digress further than I had foreseen or proposed; but to have passed them over in an historical sketch of my literary life and opinions, would have seemed to me like the denial of a debt, the concealment of a boon. For the writings of these Mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the *heart* in the *head;* gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere *reflective* faculty partook of DEATH, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter. If they were too often a moving cloud of smoke to me by day, yet they were always a pillar of fire throughout the night, during my wanderings through the wilderness of doubt, and enabled me to skirt, without

crossing, the sandy desert of utter unbelief.' I have no recollection," added Urbané, "of ever reading this passage till to-day, but had *toiled out* its truth for myself, and now set my hand and seal to it."

"It is a striking passage," said Hermes.

"You like to think for yourself," said Amplias; "and I am glad that you do."

"In one sense, this is true; in another sense, it is not. But, to go on"——

"Please to explain that paradox first. You say you think for yourself, and in the next breath that you do not."

"Well, the fact that it is my nature to carry out independent lines of thought, has led me to bring my conclusions to the test of Divine scrutiny. I not only want to know what I believe myself, but I want God to know it, so that He may rectify my errors. Now, to go on to the *reliable* Mystic of the present day. He is a man of great fervour of spirit, and, perhaps, an enthusiast in every direction. But this is not a matter of course. He may describe himself as 'an anthracite coal,' and go on to declare himself as experiencing a 'marvellous manifestation of the love of Christ' to his soul, that has moved him to his foundations. The experience transforms him. His attitude towards Christ and truth and duty, and the Word of God, is completely changed. His testimony is that of one who speaks of what he knows, and, as has been said, 'One experience is worth a thousand theories.'"

"You say he belongs to the present day. Then what

proof is there that he will not live to find all this is a mere delusion?" asked Hermes.

"I do not deny that he may. But my reasons for trusting he will not, are these: In the first place, the experience does not differ in kind from that of many who have gone before him, and who proved faithful unto death. In the second place, if Christ has entered his soul, as I believe He has done, He has entered it to *abide* there, according to promise."

"But why need he and all his set run and tell these sacred secrets? Why not preserve a modest silence, leaving time and holy living to indicate the change that has been wrought within him?"

"Thank you for the question," said Urbané. "Allow me to ask one in return. Suppose that, after years of painful poverty, you are told that in a certain field there is hidden treasure enough to supply, not only all your own wants, and make you for ever at ease, but enough for everybody. You search for it day and night; you find it; you are amazed at your wealth. Now, do you leave the remaining treasure untouched, concealed, virtually lost to the world, or do you hasten to spread abroad the good news, that your friends and neighbours may also become rich?"

"I always supposed, and thought every one supposed, that these extraordinary claimants of a special revelation of Christ made to them, reported it in a boastful temper. It is a new idea that this is done in a spirit of benevolence."

"It is done in that spirit only in part. It has a

higher motive—even to do honour to God. 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.' 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.' But, allowing no motive save the instinctive yearning for sympathy inherent in us all, is not that an explanation?"

"But you must allow that to those of us who never had any of these marvellous revelations, they *sound* visionary and *sound* conceited. Of course, it would be a fascinating thing to be lifted, suddenly and miraculously, from poor and meagre into rich and glorious Christian life. But I must experience, in order to believe it possible."

"I think that feeling perfectly natural," replied Urbané, "and do not, in the least, wonder that the happy disciple of the present day seems like a man 'drunk with new wine,' as he did after his Pentecostal baptism, ages ago. All I ask of any man is to put the matter to the test, by seeking the experience himself. Let him reason thus: Here are men and women claiming to live in an intimate relation to Christ, which I do not understand. Either they are deceived, or I am. How shall I come to a knowledge of the truth? By ignoring their testimony? By contemning it? By proving, by their human frailties, that they are greater sinners than I am? By interpreting their ascriptions to Christ, and their 'boasts in the Lord,' as conceited attempts to magnify themselves? No; I have no right to do this. In the first place, I cannot deny that these

souls are regenerate. They bear too much genuine fruit for me to deny that. In the next place, I cannot deny that they are praying souls; and if I should compare notes with them, I might have to confess that they pray more than I do. Is it not possible, therefore, that, living hard by the throne of grace, they have been taught truths not yet revealed to me?"

"One honest objection to the doctrine of sudden spiritual uplifting is, that if such wonders are possible, the Church would not have been allowed to remain ignorant of her privileges during eighteen centuries. But granting that days of Pentecostal blessing have been occurring all through her history—and can it be denied?—the Church has not been entirely ignorant. And if, at this day, some men and women are consciously receiving baptisms of the Holy Ghost, why should not every one of us claim the blessing?"

"I am an honest doubter; I ask the question in no carping spirit, for I am intensely interested. Is there not a mass of weak, religious literature in the market, which rather clogs than oils our wheels?" asked Antiochus.

"Undoubtedly there is. It is not every good man who is called upon to write books or even tracts. But religion is not the only sufferer from crude disciples."

"But may not the Mystics of the present day live to reconsider some of their own teachings, modifying them under new light?"

"They may do so. They do not claim to be infallible."

"Can you tell me what they do claim?"

"I think I can. But, in order to do it, I may have to go over ground already traversed at previous meetings."

"A *résumé* of the argument would be timely," said Apelles.

"I will describe two representative men, whom I know personally," said Urbané. "They are friends, and started in life together. To love Christ and to be like Him was their desire, even in early youth. They studied the Word of God faithfully and on their knees; they gradually learned the mysterious art of prayer, by what has been justly termed 'an apprenticeship' at the throne of grace; they busied themselves about their Master's business, and their lives were not barren of usefulness. One of them, whom I will call A., became, after a few years, satisfied that our Lord had prepared a better pathway through life than that he had been travelling, and put himself before God in the attitude of one waiting for, and expecting, sanctification. Do not associate the word sinless 'perfection' with this man, but look on him as one whom the Spirit was calling to entire consecration, such as any one of us may make. 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me!' was the secret, earnest posture of his mind, the language of his prayer. And such prayer is always answered. The blessing came down upon him like a flood. He never knew what to call it, but he accepted it with the most reverent gratitude. The change in him was very marked, and his holiness and usefulness made him the wonder and delight of his family and friends. He never ob-

truded the subject on others, yet was always ready, with meekness and fear, to describe this experience. I saw him at that time in his pulpit—he was a minister—and heard his expressions of love to the Master he was serving; and heard him preach with an unction hitherto unknown. *Now the descent of the blessing was sudden, and lifted him at once into a new world; but the preparation for it had been going on ever since he learned to pray.*"

"Did you regard him as *finished*, if I may use such a word, at that time?" said Antiochus.

"I could see little to improve in him; but he used such deprecating, humble language concerning himself, that it was hard to realise what he had gained, till you heard him pray. Then you were strangely impressed with his faith, his love, his holy boldness and consciousness of Christ. He was not naturally of a happy disposition, but he now became so habitually at rest, that, in time, his countenance acquired an expression of sweet peace previously wanting. At times, too, there was an infectious joyousness about him that was very attractive. While all this was going on, his friend B. was learning his lessons of life in quite another school. God stripped him of one thing after another, seeming, sometimes, to those who looked on, to pursue him relentlessly. 'Without were fightings, within were fears.' Satan seemed to have a special spite against him, and to oppose his every step. For many years his path lay through the wilderness. I ought, perhaps, to say, in passing, that he was a strong man in almost every sense of the word; he

wanted to understand the mystery of life; fighting was natural to him, and the trials of the way did not daunt him. He was literally a 'soldier of the cross,' and grew stronger as the battle waxed hotter. He came out, in the end, to the point A. reached long before, and with a depth of experience worth all it cost. 'God humbled and proved him to do him good in the latter end.'"

"Had A. nothing but sunshine in his life?" asked Claudia.

"He had both trials and conflicts. His character was by no means an undisciplined one."

"I should like to know these two men, and hear their own stories," said Antiochus.

"So should I," said Hermes.

"Did you not recognise in A. your kinsman, Stephanas?"

Hermes, with incredulity, "Stephanas?"

"Even he."

"I never heard—I never knew—it did not occur to me to look for an ideal character within my own doors. My thoughts are all thrown into confusion! Why, he is as gay as any boy!" said Hermes.

"Who has more reason to be gay?"

"I always associate holiness and solemnity together. And why has he maintained such reserve with me as to this remarkable experience of his?"

"Have you been ready to hear it?" asked Urbané.

"There is something in that, to be sure. At any rate, I never heard him speak of himself. But he frolics

so with my children! However, there is nothing morally wrong in that, only it does not seem *holy*. And he never talks to me religiously."

"He may have been silent to you, but has not been silent concerning you. Not a day passes that he does not pray for you as few can pray."

"This touches me inexpressibly."

"I never met with any one whose saintliness was so impressive in its silence," said Claudia. "But let any one speak slightingly of our Lord, or of any of the beloved of our Lord, and he can speak, I might almost say, with tongues, he is so inspired."

"He has lost every trace of desire to draw attention to himself. With him it is, 'None but Christ,'" said Philologus.

"I begin to realise that until the present time, it would have been useless for him to say much to me. But I am now in the mood to listen to him with some respect," said Hermes.

"Is he not very aged? How, then, can he spend his time in works of charity, as I hear he does?" asked Apelles.

"He has led a very temperate life, and, consequently, has unusually good health. I must confess that I have often sneered at his doctrine that it was wrong to be sick, not perceiving that he carried his religion to the table with him. My thoughts are in a good deal of confusion. I have always regarded him as one of the simplest, most child-like of men, with an unemotional nature; this partially accounts for my being so incredu-

lous when he was announced as a man of such depth of experience."

"Religion is a very solemn thing. One does not associate it with the trivial affairs of life," said Amplias.

"Would it not be better to do so?" asked Urbané. "Who should be joyous in his daily walk and conversation, if a Christian should not? The great charm about Stephanas to me is his perfect simplicity and naturalness. He does absolutely nothing for effect. Hence the divine life in him is hidden from the ordinary eye."

"I trust it will no longer be hidden from mine. I am going home greatly humbled and instructed," said Hermes.

"This gladdens my heart. Dear friends, we all need humbling, all need instructing. But is there not inspiration in a holy life? May we not hope for, nay, expect, what our Lord has given to others? His is no niggard hand. He loves us; He wills our sanctification; His most bountiful, wonderful gifts stand awaiting us. And what has any one of us ever found that he would not rather part with, than this Rock of his salvation?"

As Urbané warmed with his subject, he rose to his feet, and his pale, scholarly face became illumined with the love and joy and peace he had been describing. It seemed as if he could not speak of that marvellous display of the power of the Holy Ghost, when seated quietly in his chair, but must rise to do Him homage.

Antiochus whispered to Claudia, "Look at him! God's glory smites him in the face!" And, as he turned

towards her to say it, he saw the same mysterious light on hers.

A power from on high so fell upon the meeting now, that as they knelt together before parting, one after another lifted up his voice in unwonted earnestness. And then Urbané was left alone. And yet not alone, for as long as physical strength held out, he knelt and prayed, individually, for the soul of each of these friends. And as he prayed, "the fashion of his countenance was altered;" it took on somewhat of the inspiration and intensity and awe, of one who *sees* the *Invisible*, and is changing into His likeness because he sees.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYSTIC OF TO-DAY; OR, "THE HIGHER CHRISTIAN LIFE."

As Antiochus left Urbané's house, with his wife and her mother, he said, turning to the latter, "It would almost seem as if Urbané—dear old man!—believed in these people."

"Undoubtedly he does."

"And you, mother?"

"Believe as he does, in all there is good and true in them. And I was glad to hear him speak as he did to-night, because injustice has been done to some of Christ's own beloved disciples."

"But if there is error among them; why does not the Holy Spirit set them right?"

"That is a question I cannot answer. But of one thing I am quite sure. If you or I, or any other man or woman, follow all the light he has, he will keep gaining more, and will finally emerge from the region of darkness and doubt into that of perfect day. If any man will do His will, he shall know the doctrine."

"I wish I had your faith, mother."

"As to spiritual gifts, I believe we get exactly what

we want. As soon as we are ready for this or that experience, we get it."

"Have you always known this?"

"No; I fancied myself sincere when I prayed for holiness, and often felt impatient with God for not answering my prayers more speedily and decisively. But I came, at last, to see that I was not ready. I wanted to be holy, but I wanted, at the same time, to keep a spot in reserve, on which I could fall back in case I did not get out of holiness all I hoped to find in it. Do you understand me?'"

"Partly. But I have much to learn and much to remember. And the things of this life have fast hold of me."

"Well," said Junia, with much spirit, "so they should. We are not called upon to live in cells, like monks and nuns. As long as we live in this world, we must, in the very order of things, be of it. Now this evening, interested as I was in the remarks made, my head was full of other thoughts; and then, to tell the truth, I felt myself shrinking back from anything that savours of cant, or want of refinement. I did not go to the meeting entirely of my own free will. I went because you were going."

"Perhaps," said Claudia, "you made a mistake in going. Perhaps your time for such influences has not come. You know, dear, it has never been my wont to press experiences upon my children, or my children on to experiences. I have felt it wiser to pray much and say little, biding God's time."

"And we have appreciated that. But with your own

wonderful love to Christ, I should think you would despise our coldness and worldliness!"

"Despise? O Junia! How little you realise how advancing years are teaching me to despise nothing but my own imperfections!"

"But I love my husband so! The children are such precious treasures! And when I ask God to make me holy, it is just like asking Him to take them away, so as to leave room in my heart for Him. And I can't ask that!"

"Nor would He have you do so. And as to loving them, why, of course, He wants you to love them."

"But how can I help making idols of them?"

"I think you may trust Him to hinder that. If you really want Him to do it, He will—in His own way, however. And a wise self-discipline we may practise, ourselves."

When the evening for the next meeting occurred, Claudia said to Junia, "I am going to join our friends to-night, but if you feel great repugnance to doing so, it is wiser to stay at home. It is never expedient to force ourselves, from the outside, into scenes with which we cannot sympathise."

"I have two inclinations," replied Junia. "One is to go. I suppose that comes from your prayers. The other is not to go. And that comes from my wicked heart, with, perhaps, a little help from Satan. If everybody were like you and Urbané, I know I should go. But most people are so cold."

"Is Antiochus going?"

"No; or, at least, not unless you need him as an escort."

Claudia replied that, what with her maid and her gray hair, she did not need him; and the two kissed each other and parted.

Junia expected to spend the evening agreeably with her husband, but a friend came in, and they began to talk about railroad stock, and bank stock, and twenty other things in which she felt no interest.

"Men are so selfish!" she said to herself, and went up to her nursery to take account of her own stock there. Beneath blue and crimson satin coverlets her treasures lay sleeping. Four lovelier little heads never pressed mortal pillows. She hung over them, wound their damp curls round her fingers, kissed them tenderly, and, as she passed her mirror, saw a proud, delighted face there. But it was not, in the highest sense, a happy face.

Claudia sat among her friends, in a corner, as one in the mood rather to look on and to listen, than to mingle with them or say much herself.

Hermes spoke first. "I have been reading and thinking over the subjects under discussion," he said, "and have two entirely different sets of opinions about them. There are some facts I cannot get round. I suppose I describe the experience of most Christians when I say that I have never, till of late, made the subject of personal holiness a study. I have had a great deal of work to do of a secular character, and also a great deal that would come under the head of Chris-

tian work; and I have wondered at and felt a smothered contempt for the advocates of any doctrine that led to much introspection. My motto has been, 'Say little and do much.' But it has come to me lately that the work that has occupied so much time has resulted in little or no good. I do not know that there will be a single soul in heaven guided there by my hand. I do not know of a human being who is the better for my life and labour."

An almost painful silence followed these words. Then Urbané said, kindly—

"The good we do is often hidden from us."

"But that does not apply to me. I see, now, that I have worked in my own strength, and that a great deal of the muscular Christianity I have put forth has been rather the result of an attempt to pacify my conscience, than of a desire to be holy and like my Master. I have not been a reflecting, so much as a working man. But my machinery wanted the unction of love to Christ; it worked ponderously, and is now rusty. I confess, brethren, before you all, that I am waking up to new wants."

"Well, I must say that if you are waking up, it is time I was," said Amplias. "I have been comparing myself with the picture of an apostolic Christian, found in the Word, and am astonished at the result. And another thing I have learned. It is this: a mean, wicked envy has lain at the root of much of my aversion to the claimants of a 'Higher Life.' I could not bear the remotest thought that they possessed a light and a gift superior to mine."

"Permit me," said Urbané, "to state here one fact, that, in the ardour of conversation, was forgotten last week. It has been said that none of the dear brethren whose doctrines and whose lives have been under discussion, have been seen in my house. It is true, they have not held public meetings here; but now one, and now another, has been welcomed in this room. We have talked and prayed together, again and again. And while we have points of harmonious discord, we have more points of union. And I want to testify, that if there are some of them whom I cannot receive with edification, there are many others who bear the very image of Christ Himself. This room has been almost transfigured by their presence, and made a sort of heaven below."

"I have always thought them a conceited set," said Hermes; "but if you find anything in them to like, I suppose I can."

"And I have thought that all they wanted was to get together and have a good time, telling all their frames and feelings," said another.

"They are good at praying and psalm-singing, but they leave all the work to us," declared a third.

"Well," said Urbané, with a smile, "let us discard 'conceited saints,' if there are any; 'selfish saints,' 'ascetic saints,' who sit at ease by the fire, while I am feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and, with them, every other form of saintliness that does not bear the closest scrutiny, and to be tested by the Word of God. It is true, that in addition to not being saints

ourselves, we may possess all their faults, and probably do; but we make no pretension, and that is more than they can say."

"That mischievons twinkle in your eye, Urbané, speaks volumes. I, for one, sit corrected," said Hermes.

"Pardon me, brother; I stand here to correct myself only. Every rash judgment I deplore, every assumption of wisdom I repel, I have deplored and repelled in myself. No man should take a lower place here than I."

"Excuse my interruption, then, and go on, please."

"Well, take the genuine, sanctified man. Christ has come suddenly, or come gradually into his soul"—

"In regeneration?"

"Oh! I ought to have stated that I am now speaking of an experience subsequent to regeneration."

"And necessarily one of its fruits?"

"No. I believe, that in the economy of God's grace there are some of His real children who never hear of any such experience, could not understand and would not seek it if they did, and have not the responsibility in this regard that many others have. They are quiet, humble, reverent, and possibly live up to what light they have. They are perplexed, sometimes, by the sayings and doings of their more instructed brethren; but they do not dispute with or cast stones at them. They are not to be despised or criticised, but comforted and encouraged. Not a little of the modest work of life is done by them; and if they never attain the highest enjoyments or fight the decisive battles of time, they

escape much of its conflict and suffering, for both Providence and Satan can afford to let them alone, to a very great degree."

"I infer that you allude to mental suffering," suggested Claudia.

"Thank you for the correction. I ought to have made the distinction."

"Are we also to infer that strong souls endure conflicts unknown to weaker ones?"

"That is my opinion. For while it is true that a sanctified soul is a delightfully happy one, Satan has his moods of envy and rage, and at times lets fly at it his fiery darts, when its every energy is called into the field. This is peculiarly the case with those who are to do decisive work for Christ; for, as Leighton says: 'God delights to call forth His champions to meet with great temptations, to make them bear crosses of more than ordinary weight, as commanders in war put men of most valour and skill upon the hardest services. He sets some strong, furious trial upon a strong Christian, made strong by His own grace, and, by his victory, makes it appear to the world, that though there is a great deal of the counterfeit coin of profession in religion, yet some there are who have the power, the reality of it—that the very Spirit of God dwells in the hearts of true believers.' Now, to go back to the main point. We were speaking of two experiences recognised by Christians as known to many. Christ enters the soul at regeneration, but rarely, if ever, at once gets full possession there."

"I am glad the subject has come up again. If I can

only get evidence that I am really regenerate"— said Apelles.

"Oh, but you cannot! You must trust to the witness of the Spirit."

"How can I trust that which I have not?"

"Ask for increase of faith in God; for faith to believe His promises. Until you know that you have been redeemed by His precious blood, your spiritual growth will be impeded, if not suspended."

"Have I a right to plead for the witness of the Spirit?"

"You may, and must."

"Well, I have always regarded it as a becoming modesty on the part of most disciples, to speak with doubt and diffidence of their state before God," said Amplias.

"My dear brother, you are quite right there. The question, as touching your salvation, is not how you look in God's eyes, but how He looks in yours."

"Not long since, eager to clear up the point, I read Edwards on the 'Religious Affections.' It led me into a labyrinth of perplexity and discomfort, from which I should be thankful to emerge."

"We never shall become able to walk by sight. We have absolutely no righteousness of our own by which to walk. But we dishonour God by living in constant doubt and fear. 'In Him is life; and the life is the light of men.' Assurance of faith is not assurance of evidence. We can be sure of nothing in ourselves, for while we fancy in one hour that we would die for our

Lord, we may find ourselves denying Him in the next."

"As vehemently as Peter did?"

"With vehemence virtually as great. Christ is denied by cowardly silence, by worldliness, by self-indulgence, in scores of ways which He recognises and feels."

"Great complaint has been made in some quarters, in all good faith and honesty, but by those who know believers in what is called the higher life by report, rather than through personal observation, that these devoted brethren spend so much time in introspection; but the simple fact is, that this criticism applies almost exclusively to the weak disciple, who spends nearly *his whole life* in analysing his emotions, trying to find out—

"'Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?'"

On the other hand, the full-grown believer never wastes his time over a problem long ago solved for him by sovereign grace, and is in such spiritual life and health that he need not be feeling his own pulse or studying his own symptoms, but is 'at leisure from himself,' and 'looking unto Jesus.'"

"All this is news to me," said Hermes.

"We will assume, then, that the ideal man under discussion is truly regenerated, and humbly but firmly believes this to be the case. Now he will not long rest here. Regeneration is a birth into a new life, but a life that must prove its existence by growth. And growth

begins at once. And the more sure and rapid the growth, the more holiness will become the ardent desire, and the more loathsome sin will appear. The Spirit responds to the aspirations breathed into the Divine ear, and leads on and on. And while, at times, He seems to guide the soul slowly and painfully, and by a certain *law* of progression, at other times He has His diversities, and grants a sudden uplift of an extraordinary character. The blessing, however, is not arbitrarily vouchsafed. I think every one who has received it will testify that, though it came suddenly, it was not through sudden or careless seeking. There had been earnest waiting upon God, while *expectation* was from Him. I do not know what name to select for this experience that more perfectly describes it than the scriptural one—'Baptism of the Holy Spirit.' And the result—immediate in some cases, remoter in others—is that the soul feels itself so transformed that it is filled with amazement and with joy. And the reason is this: Hitherto it was under a great degree of captivity to sin, and groaned under it, being burdened. In regeneration it became conqueror over death. In sanctification it becomes conqueror over life. The assurance of eternal salvation never satisfied it. It also wanted assurance of release from bondage to sin. But while the mortal body is always liable to death, so even the sanctified human soul is always *liable* to sin, if it looks away from Christ. But it is not the slave of sin; sin does not reign over it. There is now unbroken peace with God. If I may so speak, *there is an understanding* between it

and Him that is the source of perfect rest, oft-times of joy unspeakable. God has given it His faithful friendship. It yields Him faithful friendship in return."

"Do you mean to have us understand that you think a man is suddenly so sanctified as to be beyond the need of spiritual growth?" asked Amplias.

"I think there is spiritual growth as long as we exist. A state of grace that is very soul-satisfying may, through the admission of new light, be forsaken for a higher one. Last year's nest does not meet the wants of this year's songster."

"This interests me very much," said Amplias. "But I am curious to know whether all who have this dispensation of the Spirit stand on one level?"

"I think they do not. There are varieties in this new family, as there were in the old one. The soul is kept free from sin by the indwelling Christ, just in proportion to the faith with which it holds Him."

"Do you think that a man can fall from the state of grace you have described?"

"I think he can fall a certain distance, but not into ruin. Imperfect self-knowledge may, in some cases, make it necessary that he should fall, in his own eyes, at least."

"You have alluded repeatedly," said Hermes, "to religious experiences unknown to most of us, and these last two evenings have been devoted to their fuller discussion. But we still feel ourselves in the dark."

"I have devoted two evenings to these subjects," replied Urbané, "because my soul has been stirred by

what seemed to me unjust attacks on a large class of earnest Christians, who profess to reach 'a higher life,' and have thus laid themselves open to the criticisms of those who, not having had their experience, cannot believe in it. I do not profess to know all that is meant by those who use this language, and, as it is not a scriptural, I think it an infelicitous expression. But when a man tells me that Christ has come into his soul in new life and light and energy, filling it with sacred joy and peace, and I know nothing in his career to lead me to doubt that he testifies of what he knows, I cannot help believing him. He may, sometimes, use language with which I cannot fully sympathise, but I may do the same to him."

"And what attitude do you wish us to take?" asked Apelles.

"All I wish is this: that you should go to your closets and ask God whether you are living fully up to His will."

"Oh, we need not do that!" cried several voices. "Our consciences tell us, on the spot, that we are not."

"Seek, then, for faith to live up to all the light you have. And remember that, as to genuine religious experience, 'The seal of the Spirit of God is upon it, and this is the reading of that new name in the white stone, which no man knows but him that hath it.' No one can deny that the 'beloved disciple' of Christ's day was, in the true, and not the offensive sense of the word, a mystic. No one who reads Paul's paradoxes can doubt

that he was one. Now, I do not care whether the mystics of our day are 'barbarians, Scythians, bond or free;' whether they believe in a lower life or a higher life; if they can say: '*Christ is all, and in all*,' I believe in them, and love them; and if they can tell me something new about Christ, I will gladly sit at their feet, and learn of them. It may be objected, I know, that the ideal disciple of New Testament times did not belong to any school or adopt any peculiar, technical theory of piety; nor did he pretend that Christ had taught him secrets concealed from his less favoured brethren. Granting that this is true, it is not, I think, the whole truth. Let us glance at some facts in the history of the Church. After our Lord's Ascension, the Spirit was sent, according to His promise, and the apostles were endued with power from on high. So mighty was the effect, that there were added unto them in one day about three thousand souls. To this number 'the Lord added daily,' and this body of men came to be regarded as a sect, and as such received a name. 'And the disciples were called *Christians* first at Antioch.' No man would ever have asked for a more significant name, if the Church had remained true to its Head. But it did not. The marked, boldly-pronounced features of apostolic piety soon began to disappear. 'Gladness and singleness of heart' began to disappear at the same time. Various forms of error crept in among the disciples, contentions and schisms arose; men began to put the world in Christ's place, or, in other words, to live for self, not for Him. But a remnant of loving, praying, consecrated

souls was left. Loyalty to their Master was the deepest principle and passion of their lives. And in every age we find that faithful band rallying around, defending the cross. Now, this class of Christians had peculiarities of its own that distinguished it from the multitude of believers even, and it became necessary to give it some title. And as the ages varied, as even devoted and devout men varied, one espousing one form of belief, while his honest brother did battle for another; all sorts of appellations came in vogue, and destroyed, to some degree, the true meaning and beauty of the word Christian. My brethren, when you now use that word, do you mean that every one who bears the name is Christ's faithful servant, in the strictest sense in which the term is used?"

"It is not so much to the use of terms that I object," said Hermes; "it is to deeds. You cannot deny that a certain class go off by themselves, professing that there is a new kind of experience known to them alone."

"People who think and feel alike, naturally fall together," replied Urbané. "Scientific men do it; so do artists and musicians. But if, by our coldness and deadness, we drive our brethren away, the fault is ours, not theirs. I do not believe that any body of real Bible-Christians is trying to form, or has formed, a sect which shuts out other Bible-Christians. We are one family, and Christ is our Head. It is true, there are to be found in every evangelical church men who, like myself, believe He may shine forth more gloriously in the soul than it is believed by others He ever does; but this can

hardly be called difference of doctrine: it is a practical question, which I desire every one of you should pursue for himself. I will close my remarks with words of Dr Chalmers' that seem to me to express vital truth: 'Unless I make religion my great and engrossing concern, I shall be a stranger to all solid peace and enjoyment. I have at times caught a glimpse of the comfort which it yields to the spirit, when I merge my will into God's will—when I resolve to have no will of my own separate from God. I feel quite assured that this renunciation of self, and entire devotion to God's service, would give a simplicity and grandeur to my existence; would throw an unclouded sunshine over all my ways; would raise me above the cares and provocations of this life; would enhance even my sensible gratifications, and superadd those gratifications of a higher order, which constitute the main and essential blessedness of heaven. O my God, may it be thus with me! Call me out of nature's darkness into Thine own marvellous light. Give me to aspire after the graces, and to hold forth to my acquaintances, and, above all, to my children, the example of all righteousness. Conform me to the gospel economy under which I sit, that as Christ died for sin, I may die to it: that as He rose again, I may rise to newness of life, and feel it my meat and drink to do Thy will.'

"Take its closing sentence home, and make it your prayer. And remember, as you do so, that when 'Abraham believed God,' it was imputed unto him for righteousness! Can stronger language than this be

used to impress man with the immense honour God puts upon faith in His Word?"

The meeting was now closed, as usual, with prayer, and the little company dispersed. Three or four young persons, however, remained behind. They were, as yet, weak in faith, and much that they had heard bewildered them. Not one of them possessed that assurance of which Urbané had spoken, and they now gathered about him as children round a father to state difficulties and seek counsel. After listening patiently, Urbané took from his desk a little manuscript prepared years before for the instruction of his own son, and desired them to meet together at their convenience, and read, and discuss, and pray over it, till its full meaning should become plain to them. And as this allegory may be of use to some earnest young disciple, it is here given.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ALLEGORY.

A BENEVOLENT man found a half-starved, homeless, blind beggar-boy in the streets of a great city. He took him, just as he was, to his own house, adopted him as his own son, and began to educate him. But the boy learned very slowly, and his face was often sad. His father asked him why he did not fix his mind more upon his lessons, and why he was not cheerful and happy, like the other children. The boy replied that his mind was constantly occupied with the fear that he had not really been adopted as a son, and might at any moment learn his mistake.

Father. But can you not believe me when I assure you that you are my own, dear son?

Boy. I cannot; for I can see no reason why you should adopt me. I was a poor, bad boy; you did not need any more children, for you had a house full of them, and I never can do anything for you.

Father. You can love me and be happy; and as you grow older and stronger, you can work for me.

Boy. I am afraid I do not love you; that is what troubles me.

Father. Would you not be very sorry to have me deny that you are my son, and turn you out of the house?

Boy. Oh yes! But perhaps that is because you take good care of me, not because I love you.

Father. Suppose, then, I should provide some one else to take care of you, and should then leave you?

Boy. That would be dreadful.

Father. Why? You would be taken good care of, and have every want supplied.

Boy. But I should have no father. I should lose the best thing I have. I should be lonely.

Father. You see you love me a little, at all events. Now, do you think I love you?

Boy. I don't see how you can. I am such a bad boy, and try your patience so. And I am not half as thankful to you for your goodness as I ought to be. Sometimes, for a minute, I think to myself, He *is* my father, and he really loves me; then I do something wrong, and I think nobody would want such a boy, nobody can love such a boy.

Father. My son, I tell you that I do love you, but you cannot believe it because you do not know me. And you do not know because you have not seen me; because you are blind. I must have you cured of this blindness.

So the blind boy had the scales removed from his eyes, and began to see. He became so interested in using his eyesight that, for a time, he partially lost his old habit of despondency. But one day, when it began

to creep back, he saw his father's face light up with love, as one after another of his children came to him for a blessing, and said to himself, *They* are his own children, and it is not strange that he loves them, and does so much to make them happy. But I am nothing but a beggar-boy; he can't love me. I would give anything if he could. Then the father asked why his face was sad, and the boy told him.

Father. Come into this picture-gallery, and tell me what you see.

Boy. I see a portrait of a poor, ragged, dirty boy. And here is another. And another. Why, the gallery is full of them!

Father. Do you see anything amiable and lovable in any of them?

Boy. Oh, no!

Father. Do you think I love your brothers?

Boy. I know you do!

Father. Well, here they are, just as I took the poor fellows out of the streets.

Boy. Out of the streets, as you did me? They are all your adopted sons?

Father. Every one of them.

Boy. I don't understand it. What made you do it?

Father. I loved them so that I could not help it.

Boy. I never heard of such a thing! You loved these miserable beggar-boys? Then you must be made of Love!

Father. I am. And that is the reason I am so

grieved when some such boys refuse to let me become their father.

Boy. Refuse? Oh, how can they? Refuse to become your own dear sons? Refuse to have such a dear, kind, patient father? Refuse *love?*

Father. My poor, little blind boy, don't you now begin to see your father's heart? Don't you see that I did not wait for these adopted sons of mine to wash and clothe themselves, to become good, and obedient, and affectionate, but loved them *because* they were such destitute, wicked, lost boys. I did not go out into the streets to look for well-dressed, well-cared-for, faultless children, who would adorn my house, and shine in it like jewels. I sought for outcasts; I loved them as outcasts; I knew they would be ungrateful and disobedient, and never love me half as much as I did them; but that made me all the more sorry for them. See what pains I am taking with them, and how beautifully some of them are learning their lessons. And now tell me, my son, in seeing this picture-gallery, do you not begin to see me? Could anything less than love take in such a company of poor beggars?

Boy. Yes, my father, I do begin to see it. I do believe that I know you better now than I ever did before. I believe you love even me. And now I *know* that I love you!

Father. Now, then, my dear son, let that vexing question drop for ever, and begin to act as my son and heir should. You have a great deal to learn, but I will myself be your teacher, and your mind is now

free to attend to my instructions. Do you find anything to love and admire in your brothers?

Boy. Indeed, I do.

Father. You shall be taught the lessons that have made them what they are. Meanwhile, I want to see you look cheerful and happy, remembering that you are in your father's heart.

Boy. Dear father, I will! But oh, help me to be a better son!

Father. Dear boy, I will.

CHAPTER X.

STEPHANAS AND HERMES.

LET us turn aside here to follow Hermes to his home, there to make the acquaintance of his relative Stephanas.

He was in his own room, seated before a ruddy fire, and on each knee he held a little grand-child. One was a boy of four, with a thoughtful face; the other his twin-brother, full of animation and spirit. Hermes offered to take one of the children, but both hung back, and clung to their grandfather.

"They love you better than they do me," said Hermes. "Do you call that fair?"

"That is because they see so little of you," was the reply. "Now I am in-doors so much that I am nurse, and playmate, and papa, all in one."

"I wish you would send them off to bed," said Hermes, "I want to have a little talk with you."

"But this is their hour," replied Stephanas. "They always come to me for an hour, after dinner."

"This is the fourth time that I have tried to get an opportunity to speak with you," objected Hermes. "You really seem to wish to evade me."

"Well, little boys, will you give grandpapa up, for just this once?" asked Stephanas.

They looked at each other, and at him; evidently they were accustomed to yield to his wishes, and yet the loss of an hour of story-telling was a great sacrifice to them.

Stephanas whispered a few words to them which had a magic effect. They put their little arms around his neck, kissed him, slipped down from his knee, and said to Hermes, "We make you a present of grandpapa for to-night."

"And I suppose he has promised to make you a present of some candy, in return?" said Hermes.

"Why, no, it isn't that!" said one of them, "all he said was, that when Jesus was a little boy, four years old, He would do whatever He was asked; and we love Jesus, dearly."

This little speech may sound somewhat priggish to those not accustomed to young children. But it was in truth a natural utterance of the cheerful faith generally found in them when they live among saintly influences, which are not morbid, but sound. Always hearing Stephanas speak of Christ as his personal, beloved Friend, these children never knew the time when they did not believe in and love Him.

Neither of them had ever used the word "I" in his life. It was always "we."

They stood before their father now, in the simplicity and freshness of childhood, a beautiful brace of boys. Hermes looked at them and sighed; his troubled air

repelled them; they kissed him timidly, and withdrew.

Hermes sat a long time in silence. He hardly knew how to begin. At last he said:

"Do you think Urbané's notions sound?"

"His notions? What notions?"

"On religious subjects."

"Oh, has he been talking to you?"

"To me, and other members of his church. He thinks we are not living up to our privileges, and he has so stirred up some of the young people that they talk of nothing else."

"What, forsake their proper avocations?" asked Stephanas, in surprise.

"No, not quite that. But it seems to me it is better to live one's religion, than to talk it."

"Certainly; but does Urbané teach any other doctrine?"

"Not in so many words. But I think the tendency of such religious exhortation is to make people look too much at themselves and their own experiences."

Stephanas was silent.

"I never liked introspection," said Hermes.

"My son," said Stephanas, "you misapprehend Urbané, if you suppose he does. Nothing can be farther from his own personal habit than to look into himself, or counsel others to practices of the sort. I have heard him preach many times, and it could all be summed up in these words: 'Christ Alpha and Omega,' —'Christ all in all.'"

"Yes," said Hermes thoughtfully, "that is true. At the same time, I never heard him preach in the pulpit as he talks now in his study."

"I think I can explain that. The fulness of time had not come for him. He doubted whether he should gain anything by promulgating doctrines to which some might object. But I presume he has been led to feel that a revival is needed in his church, and has begun, as he ought to do, among those who profess Christ. It would be useless to undertake to 'revive' what has never been alive."

"That has not occurred to me," said Hermes. "And now, to come to the very heart of things, I hear, through Urbané, that many years ago you passed through a certain religious experience, of a remarkable character. I confess that I felt hurt that you had never spoken of this to me."

"My dear son, would you have listened with respect had I tried to do so?"

"Perhaps not. Probably not. Yet, four years ago, when I was left wifeless and you childless, and life had lost all attraction for me—was I not softened then?"

"You were, indeed; and I thought God's set time for uniting you fully to Himself had come. But then came almost instantaneous reaction; you steeled yourself to bear your sorrow in stony silence; not even through those motherless little ones could I get access to you."

"They robbed me of the wife of my youth," was the gloomy reply.

"*God* was the robber," said Stephanas gently, "if you were robbed. These dear little boys were not in fault."

"I take no pleasure in them," said Hermes. "They do not love me."

"Love must give in order to receive," said Stephanas. "As far as a man can supply a woman's place, I should have been glad to see you playing with, teaching, loving, these dear boys. Children need to have gladsome things about them, but your gloom has repelled your little ones."

"Is it not enough to make a man gloomy to lose his wife?"

"No, my son; not if he is in Christ. A man can suffer without gloom. A well-spring of joy is found in every sanctified heart, and it is a joy that no outward want can disturb."

"The day I was born joy died."

Stephanas was silent, yet looking upward for counsel what to say next.

Hermes, however, spoke first.

"Urbané," he said, "has been trying to show that at different periods of even regenerate life, men come under a special dispensation of the Spirit, and are brought into very close and delightful relations to Christ. Do you agree with him?"

"I do. But you do not understand him as saying that these new processes are necessary; that some souls do not, from the outset, go on from strength to strength, with no marked religious epoch in their Christian career?"

"No, he never says that. He refers rather to those who started feebly and have walked falteringly. He says, too, that those who are to be made special workmen in the Church have special preparation; while with others these marvellous revelations of Christ are only given on the death-bed, as foretastes of heaven."

"I agree with him perfectly."

"He urges us to consecrate ourselves wholly to God, and to make personal holiness the first object in life. Now, the word has a somewhat vague meaning, to my mind."

"When Christ was upon earth, He gave what we may consider its definition when He said: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' Perfect love to God, perfect love to man. Heaven begun below!"

"But such perfection is impossible."

"If that is true, God demands something He knows man can never attain."

"But look at the mass of even renewed men and women. They make mistakes that are incomprehensibly absurd, and display an amount of imperfection to those who know them intimately, that is fearful."

"But you and I have nothing to do with the errors or sins of others, save in the way of tender pity for them, and deep, humble gratitude to God if He keeps us from kindred failures. Dear Hermes,

believe all Urbané tells you, and go to God, resolved to find the love that he preaches and exemplifies. I assure you, it will transfigure life to you."

"I am getting my ideas a little clarified, but am still somewhat sceptical, hardly knowing what to aim at."

"Take the Word of God as your standard, and then follow its teachings. If you think it speaks equivocally on the subject of holiness, do not argue the matter, but find out for yourself *how* perfectly Christ can live in you."

"I never shall be a Saint Paul."

"Of course not. You are not called upon to be another man, but to make the best of the man God has committed to your charge. My dear Hermes, how I have longed to see this day! Are you not conscious that the Spirit is hovering about you, *waiting* to be gracious?"

"But I have so little time."

"It takes but a moment of time to believe in Christ."

"I know that docile natures receive Him, at regeneration, with great ease and simplicity; and I suppose such natures enter readily into deeper experiences, as they are explained to them. But I am not one of that sort. I have to dig my way to what I want. I went through fire and water at the time of my conversion."

"Well, did the 'fire and water' convert you, or did you, at last, in self-despair, drop the contest, and receive Christ by faith?"

"I shall have to own that I did cease to struggle, and then believed."

"And thus you are to receive Him anew, if you want Him to come and give a more soul-satisfying view of Himself."

"I must own that I do want just that. Urbané's talks and prayers have led me to much reflection. I am not a happy man, and I yearn for rest. And if I knew I could become like him by walking round the world, I would begin the walk to-night."

"I do not doubt it, nor that a crowd of eager, restless beings would go with you. But since the simple 'walk of faith' will make you like Christ, why walk round the world to be like Urbané? How he would shudder at the idea of your imitating him—a weak mortal man!"

"I must ask one question more. Are you and Urbané, and men of your stamp, perfectly satisfied with what you know and possess of Christ?"

"In the sense of being perfectly at rest, we are satisfied. But we every day, as we advance in the knowledge and love of our dear Lord, find depths in Him hitherto unexplored; there is, therefore, an ever-sensible but sweet yearning to know and love more. Our capacities keep enlarging, that we may take in more, and will, I think, through all eternity."

"You believe in the work of grace, then, as progressive," said Hermes, in a tone of great relief. "I supposed the whole thing, according to Urbané, was to be done once for all, and in the twinkling of an eye."

"I am sure you misunderstood him, then. I know that Urbané has had afflictions and trials that were the occasions of spiritual growth, and that he has repeatedly felt the need of deeper spiritual work within. At one time in our lives, both being deeply impressed with a desire for greater usefulness, we met every day in his study, to claim the promise made to 'two or three.'"

"And were those prayers answered?"

"Can you doubt that they were? Why, the windows of heaven were fairly *opened!*"

There was a long silence, Hermes looking steadily into the fire, Stephanas steadfastly looking up to Christ.

At last, Hermes said: "I have a confession to make to you, father. When Urbané first spoke of you as having had remarkable revelations made to you in your youth, I was incredulous. I never knew you till my marriage, five years ago; and when you came to live, at that time, under my roof, I thought you one of the simplest, freshest, gladdest characters I ever had met, always excepting my dear wife. But I did not dream that this simplicity and joyousness were the results of religious, rather than traits of natural life; nor did I ever recognise the Christ dwelling in my darling. But I have been reading over her letters and reviewing her life, and, unsuspected by you, trying to trace to their hidden sources your peace and joy, as well as hers. And no sermon, no book, has impressed me like the Christian living of you two."

The eyes of Stephanas filled with tears; he gave his

hand to Hermes, but, for some moments, could not speak. He then rose, went to his desk, unlocked it, and took thence a letter.

"The time has come, I think," he said, "to put you into possession of this letter, which was addressed to you by the mother of your boys very shortly before their birth. She charged me not to give it to you one moment too soon, even if I had to wait years for that moment. Take it to your own room, and read it there; and may God bless you!"

For an unemotional man, Hermes was greatly moved; the precious document in his hand was almost as sacred as if it had come from heaven itself; and he locked himself into his room with jealous care, lest some other eye than his own should fall upon its pages.

My Darling Husband,—In a very few hours, perhaps, I shall be a radiant young mother. Oh, what a word for poor little me to use! But I may also be a radiant young soul, going straight home to Christ. And that would be yet more wonderful! If I am not, this letter will never reach you; if your dear hands are holding it now, I shall have been gone a good while perhaps. Now let me try to fancy it: I have been a happy little mother one hour, two hours, a few days—oh, so happy! and then we fall into each other's arms, and have only time to say good-bye, and I go away to Christ. I cannot take you with me; I cannot even take that little, helpless treasure with me; but I am not afraid to go, for I go to what is far better. But you, my darling, what will you do? You will never want another wife; and at first you will not love even *my* baby, and you will not let anybody get near enough to comfort you. You will think God cruel for taking me away; and instead of going to Him for rest, you will plunge

into business, and try to have no time to think. Father will be my baby's mother, and he will not talk to and annoy you; he will just go on living his beautiful life, and praying for you, and at last the day will come when he can give you this letter. And your poor, lonely, frozen heart will melt; you will cry like a child, and then you will fling yourself down on the little rug by my bedside, where I used to pray, and give yourself away to Christ in that new, precious way He taught me. I think it quite worth while that I should die for this, for now, Hermes, you will begin to live!

The strong, proud man cast the letter from him with a gesture of despair, and gave way to such a burst of tears as mortal eye rarely sees. The bright girl who had walked by his side only one year, had taken his measure; all she had prophesied had come to pass. And when grief had had its way, he threw himself down upon the consecrated spot where the youthful wife had prayed, and lifted up his cry to heaven. Hour succeeded hour, and he prayed on, all the strength of a determined will holding him there; and just as the early morning dawned, such a flood-tide of peace and joy overwhelmed his soul that he could hardly sustain it. From that moment he was a new man. He who of stones could raise up children unto Abraham, was able, out of this flinty heart, to form a warm, and tender, and loving one. Hermes had no difficulty now in winning his little boys; they had gained, not only an affectionate father, but a delightful playfellow. His new-found happiness ran over in all sorts of genial little streams, so that Stephanas fairly renewed his youth. Hermes talked no more about "want of time." He found "time" to grow in grace,

"time" to study the Word of God, "time" to work for Christ, "time" to pray.

Let us not fancy this marked change a fabulous one. Let the sceptic, on the contrary, resolve to know, by experience, whether such things can be.

And now let a word of caution be offered. The night of laborious prayer through which Hermes passed is not held up as a model for persons in delicate health, or those of advanced years, whose days of strong emotion should not be renewed. If they want the blessing, they may have it without the price of a long night or nights of weeping; it is not tears, it is not emotion, that plucks it out of an unwilling hand—*it is faith* laying hold of a loving, waiting, yearning Heart.

CHAPTER XI.

FAITH.

SEVERAL persons had requested that the subject of Faith might be discussed, and Urbané accordingly introduced it thus:

"In looking at the character of fallen man, we see that he has lost the image of God, in which he was created, and find that he is not only driven out of his earthly paradise, but that the gates of heaven are also closed against him. But Christ has come and suffered in his stead; and both Love and Justice are satisfied. A blessed inheritance lies before him, subject, however, to his own will."

"To his own will! How is that?" asked Apelles.

"'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.' God sets the way before man in His Word, by His Spirit, and in every other possible form of instruction."

"But why does He not *oblige* men to repent and believe?" asked Amplias.

"I do not know. I only know that He never destroys man's free agency. He sets the truth plainly

before him, that he must repent and believe, and leaves him to his choice."

"And why is it so hard to do these simple things?"

"The difficulty lies a good deal in man's want of simplicity. Most persons have a notion that a long series of emotional exercises must be gone through with in order to get into a state which will dispose God to regard them as favourable objects of mercy. The truth is, the moment God says to a sinner, 'Believe on Me, and thou shalt be saved,' the instantaneous reply should be, 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.' But instead of doing that, he begins to parley with God. He says he wants to feel more; that he is quite unworthy, that he is a great sinner, that he cannot see any reason why he should be saved. The struggle becomes very painful; he weeps, and groans, and prays, and strives, and the harder he works the less progress he makes. At last, seeing that he never shall be fit to come to Christ, he falls into His outstretched arms and is safe. He has found out what saving faith means. But he also soon begins to find that he has taken only one step, and that there is yet another sort of faith which he must exercise, or all his lifetime be subject to bondage. For he becomes more and more conscious, every day, of the existence of an element within that is contrary to the mind and will of God. Now a new struggle begins. He is determined to be righteous, and says so. But as fast as he cuts off the head of one sin,

another springs up. He makes new resolutions, watches, weeps, prays, repents, and fails. He is bitterly grieved, ashamed, and disappointed. He cries, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'"

"You have painted my portrait to the life. This was my exact experience at one time," said Antiochus.

"And mine," said Hermes, "up to a certain point."

"Nor has mine been much better," said Apelles.

"Isn't it hard that we have to go through life thus tormented? Is it not almost enough to keep men from following Christ, if they get so little comfort out of Him?"

"Has He not promised us His peace?" asked Urbané.

"Does that mean anything more than a tolerably comfortable hope of eternal life?"

"Do you suppose that Paul spent his Christian life in a state of unrest?" asked Urbané.

"Certainly. Everybody does, except a few boasting Pharisees, who imagine themselves perfect."

"Let us look at Paul's whole life, rather than judge him by one utterance. What are the believer's sources of happiness?"

"The hope of eternal life; peace with God, love to Christ, love to man, usefulness," said Apelles.

"Right. Paul had all these sources of happiness to a very unusual degree, and in addition, he had revelations made to him that he dared not utter. His life was unselfish, it was brimming with love to his

Master and to the Church, and crowded with labours. It had its sorrows, and trials, and hardships, but he says, 'I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation;' and has evidently triumphed over sin, since in his parting words he says he has 'fought a good fight,' and 'kept the faith.'"

"But was not this one of his last utterances: 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief'? And again, 'I am the least of all saints'?"

"Well, *was* he the least of all saints, and the chief of all sinners? I believe he was a sinful man, in the sense that he was liable to sin if left to himself, and that this is true of every saint. But that Paul, and men of his stamp, spend their lives in sins and groans, I do not believe. To say 'Christ liveth in me,' but it is in the midst of self-seeking, wrath, envy, pride, and all manner of unholy passions, is a contradiction. I shall hope to resume the subject of the indwelling Christ on some future evening. Meanwhile, let us avoid useless discussions, and be constantly looking, not at ourselves, but 'unto Jesus.'"

"May I ask you a personal question?" asked Amplias.

"You may probe me through and through."

"Are you seeking perfection?"

"I am. I hate so much as a hair of my head that is not conformed to the will of God, and live in the daily pursuit of that will."

"Well, now, since we began these meetings, and you

had said that faith is better than fight, I have tried to trust God to deliver me from an easily-besetting sin, that has been a trial to me all my life. And I have been worse than ever."

"A praying child of God growing *worse!* It is not true. Your conscience has only been led to set up a higher standard. I happen to know to what you refer, and am happy to say that one of your family told me that it was giving way before divine grace."

"I am almost sorry you told me, for now I shall be less on my guard, and so fall into it again, or else have a fit of spiritual pride, which is worse."

"And cannot Christ so stand between you and yourself, that you can see Him only?"

"You used very strong language just now about your hatred of sin. Sin has never been made so 'exceeding sinful' to me," said Amplias.

"A true sense of sin is the gift of God. Our self-knowledge is about equal to a grain of sand. But knowledge of Christ is worth any amount of self-knowledge, for it is His holiness that makes vileness so exceedingly vile. The eye of the sanctified soul is very sensitive; the merest speck of dust hurts it and brings tears."

"That is not true of the eye of my soul. I believe I need a complete renovating."

"And this renovating no man can do for himself. It is the work of the Spirit."

"What is the process of sanctification?" asked Apelles.

"The Spirit has diversities of operation, but the one universal method is to be found in the dying words of our Lord, when He spake unto the Father of a mystical union between Himself and His Church. 'I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me.'

"We have here, first, a new assurance that 'God is love,' since we are told that He loves His Church as He loves His Son. And, second, we learn that Christ will enter the souls of His beloved, and dwell there. Hence Paul says, 'But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord.' And again, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'"

"But I do not understand how Christ lives in a soul."

"Perhaps I can make it somewhat plainer to you by an illustration. Here is a man whom the owner of a certain vineyard has placed there to dress and to keep it. The man digs about the vines, waters them, exhausts his strength over them, but they bear next to no fruit, and that of poor quality. He tries new methods of culture in vain. He fancies his soil must be worse than that of his neighbour, who gathers a rich harvest every year, and grows discontented, discouraged, and despairing. He says to himself, 'I have done all I can. It is obvious that I am incapable

of keeping this vineyard, and as I have an account to render to its owner, must find some one able and willing to undertake this work.' He finds him, and gives up the management of everything into his hands, but watches to see what is done. The new vine-dresser cuts up the brambles that are entangled among the vines, and gives them to be burned; he roots up and throws away many of the vines themselves; all that remain he prunes till the vineyard becomes unsightly. But anon, a new, sound growth springs up; everything puts on an aspect of health, and fruit rewards the labour. This is a very feeble image of what will be the result when a man ceases from 'deadly doing,' and admits Christ into his soul; it touches the truth at only one point, however, for man is not to sit with folded hands and let the process of assimilation go on, without the energetic concurrence of his own will."

"All this gives one a new idea on the subject of personal holiness. If what you say is true, we need no longer struggle for spiritual attainments, but just let Christ's graces shine forth from us. But alas! who, save Paul, dares say, 'Christ liveth in me?'"

"It is my privilege to point you to yours, and I hope for more and more light from on high, with which to keep on doing it."

"It is a great mystery, this union of Christ to the believer."

"It is. You will hear the apostles speaking again and again of the 'mystery of faith,' the 'mystery of

godliness,' the 'mystery of God.' But the mystery, 'the secret of the Lord, is with them that fear Him.' He conceals nothing from us that we need to know."

"In order to enable us to understand the union between Himself and the soul, He uses varied language concerning it. He says, 'I am the vine, and ye are the branches;' that He 'abides in us, and we in Him;' and in wonderful condescension He makes the conjugal relation a type of His attitude towards us; I really feel, in reading such expressions of desire to come down to our poor, human comprehension, as I suppose I should do if He proposed to wash my feet, as He once humbled Himself to wash those of the disciples." So spake Philologus, in unusual warmth.

"There is always humility in real love," said Urbané, "and as Christ has shown His in endless acts of condescension to us, so let us manifest ours to Him by the deepest humiliation and lowliness of heart. And I trust you are now prepared to admit that as man is unable to save, so he is unable to sanctify himself; that as faith in Christ justifies, so faith in Christ sanctifies him. Leighton says:

"'It is the inactivity of faith in Jesus that keeps us so imperfect, and wrestling still with our corruptions, without any advancement. We wrestle in our own strength too often, and so are justly—yea, necessarily foiled; it cannot be otherwise till we make Him our strength.'"

"I cannot say that 'all things have become new'

to me," said Amplias, "and it is a matter of grief and shame with me that this is the case. I wish I understood better what I really do need. What is to be our subject next week?"

"Have you one you wish discussed?" asked Urbané.

"If it will not interfere with your plan, I should be glad of some suggestions on the subject of prayer."

"Very well. I shall enter upon it with great interest."

CHAPTER XII.

PRAYER.

"It has not surprised me," said Urbané, "to learn that many of you young people are in no little confusion of mind as to some of the thoughts I have expressed here. The subjects discussed are attended with grave and subtle difficulties, and, perhaps, in trying to fix your eye on some of your privileges, I have 'darkened counsel' by unwise words. I entreat you all to join me in the prayer that I may not be a 'blind leader of the blind,' or encourage hopes life is doomed to disappoint. As we advance, I trust to show what you may expect from God, if you give all to God, more clearly than in these few interviews I have been able to do.

"I have been requested to speak, this evening, on the subject of prayer. If any of you have questions to ask, I shall be glad to hear, and try to answer them."

"I have been talking with a young friend of my own age," said Apelles, "on the subject of having stated seasons of prayer in the closet. He laughs at the idea. He says one should be guided entirely by one's moods in the Divine, as in human friendships. He says no

man goes to see another by rule; he goes when he feels like it."

"He compares his relations to the most august Being in the universe, to his ordinary, human friendships?"

"Oh, I did not agree with him; yet I did not know exactly what to say."

"The Word of God only partially instructs us how often we should retire from all other fellowships to be alone with Him, but I believe no earnest Christian, in his senses, fails to do it twice or thrice daily, and we read of one who said, 'Seven times a day do I praise Thee.'"

"But this was not in the closet necessarily," said Philologus.

"No; nor could many persons secure time for seven seasons of retirement. But morning and evening sacrifice should certainly be offered."

"But suppose one is not in a prayerful mood when his allotted season arrives?" was asked.

"Let him go and tell his Father so, and ask Him, for Christ's sake, to forgive this coldness, and to be shown its cause."

"Shall he do this, day after day?"

"Yes, if that is the best he can do. It has been justly said that one must serve an apprenticeship to the art of prayer, before he can learn it. We have, some of us, seen a lump of clay, placed upon a wheel, and a pair of human hands, amid the revolutions of that wheel, evolve from the shapeless mass a cup of graceful proportions, which seems wrought by a magical touch. But we are

assured by the artisan that his is one of the most difficult of trades; that it is learned through long failure and discouragement, and that what looks like the magician's wand, is really the skill of an accomplished workman. Now, a man must learn to pray through many a trial and defeat; yet learn he must, or his soul shall starve and die."

"But where is he to find time?"

"Just where he finds time to perform the other duties of life."

"And you would insist on it as a *habit?*"

"Yes; insisting is the exact word."

"Suppose it is performed merely as a duty; what then?"

"Perform the duty."

"But we do not want our earthly friends to come to us from a sense of duty. If they have no better motive, they are welcome to stay away."

"Therein we see one of the differences between Divine and human friendship. Our Father, knowing our ignorance, sinfulness, and weakness, has provided a way to impart His wisdom and holiness to us. He invites us to come and tell Him what we want. He never says, 'My child, when your heart is overflowing with love for Me, come and tell Me all about it, that I may enjoy it.' He says, 'When you are cold and dead, come and tell Me, that I may inspire you, by my Spirit, with warmth.' Nor does He say, 'When you feel wise, come and impart of your wisdom to Me;' but when you can say, 'So foolish am I, and ignorant, I am as a beast before

Thee,' He declares, 'Come to Me, then, and from a foolish and ignorant beast I will transform you into a perfect man in Christ Jesus.'"

"Does not consciousness of sin often keep one from the throne of grace?"

"Through false views of God, it does. But the sooner one learns that he never will be worthy to speak to God in prayer, the better for him. No matter how holy he may become, he can never approach God, save through the mercy and merits of Christ; never."

"Some think it mechanical and formal to set apart fixed seasons of daily prayer."

"With no rules and formalities, the whole structure of life would fall to pieces. Suppose a boy to be apprenticed by his father to learn a trade, and instead of going daily to his task, he waits to feel like it, and idles about some other employment, waiting for an attraction to his duty? I think many of the difficulties attending the subject of prayer would disappear, if it could be regarded, in early life, as an art that must be acquired through daily, persistent habits, with which nothing shall be allowed to interfere. I wish to impress upon our young friends here that their Father means to have them learn this art, and will condescend to teach them Himself, if they will only respond to His design."

"I have never been taught this. And I should be ashamed to confess how careless and fragmentary and cold my prayers have been," said Amplias.

"I have always been interested in the subject, and

wanted instruction. It has always seemed to me that prayer might become a great luxury," said Apelles.

"Never seek it as such. The great want of the human soul is Christ, not feelings about Christ."

"Is not the yearning for happiness instinctive and innocent?"

"It is instinctive, and within certain limits, innocent. But it loses its innocence the moment it begins to be the object of life. In its best and noblest forms, happiness is never found when pursued."

"But do not advanced Christians find great delight in prayer?" asked Apelles, ever on the alert for pleasurable emotions.

"Certainly. But they have learned, what you must learn, to make little account of the varied emotive states in which they come to God. It is, no doubt, more agreeable to ascend to the mount of transfiguration, there to behold the shining face of the Beloved, than to plough one's way along the everyday pathway of duty; but the question is not one of mere delight."

"I supposed that if my prayer were dry and lifeless, it was a sign that I ought to stop praying, and wait for a better frame."

"Never do that. When one of your little brothers asks you to lend him your knife, do you inquire first what is the state of his mind? And if you do, what reply can he make but this: 'The state of my mind is, I want your knife?'"

"I have heard persons speak of holding communion with God. What is that?"

"It is His Spirit responding harmoniously to our own."

"I do not understand you."

"Do you not sometimes find yourself doomed, for hours, to uncongenial society? And can you look and talk and act like yourself, when you know you will be misunderstood?"

"No; I can only act like myself when in congenial society."

"Suppose, now, that you go to your closet, with low conceptions of God, in a temper so worldly as to be utterly uncongenial to Him, that He cannot respond to your careless prayer—you leave the throne of grace cheerless and unrefreshed. But suppose you have been studying His character and that of His Son, till it looks beautiful in your eyes, and you go to Him to tell Him so, and reverently to ask Him to form you into His likeness—you want just what He wants—to a degree you are congenial to Him, and He can act like Himself; and when He does that, He gives you the sweet consciousness of His presence and blessing;—that is called communion with Him."

"Does not this tend to self-exaltation?"

"No. Each new favour shown it by God humbles the believing soul. It knows its unworthiness, and is astonished at the leniency and kindness with which it has been treated."

"I never had any experience of communion with God, if I understand you. Probably no young person has."

"In the times of President Edwards, record was

made of a child of four years, I think, who, after seeking God in prayer, complained: 'God won't come to me; I call Him, and He won't come to me.' A little time after, she came from her room joyfully exclaiming: 'Mother, God has come; He comes to me now when I pray to Him!'"

"Of course she died?"

"Died young, you mean? She did not. She reached the age of sixty years, and ever retained wonderful power in prayer."

"'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise!'" said Apelles. "I am put to the blush by a child of four years!"

"But do not be discouraged. Rejoice that you are not thoughtless on this subject. And let me assure you that, when you have learned to pray, you have entered, as it were, the land where the Tree of Life stands, laden with foliage and with fruit, that shall not only refresh and strengthen and nourish your own soul, but every soul you love. No man liveth to himself, or runs his race alone."

"Go on, go on; tell us all you know."

"I would fain have you learn, from the direct teachings of the Spirit, far more than I know. I can give you no new, original thoughts on the subject, but I earnestly desire to *impress* you with familiar ones."

"We are, probably, more ignorant and less prayerful than you are aware. Cannot you give us some directions? You spoke of prayer as an apprenticeship, but I have heard you call it the gift of God."

"And it is truly His gift. You can go to your closet and utter devout language there, but really to pray, you must have thoughts and desires inspired by the Spirit."

"Are we to seek temporal as well as spiritual gifts?" asked Amplias.

"'In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' But temporal blessings should occupy little of our thoughts. 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.' Pray, too, *expecting* to be heard; yet in submission, and in patience."

"I have a brother, who is an unbeliever. I have often wished to speak of him to you. I have prayed for him again and again, to no purpose."

"You never can know it is to no purpose till the last day."

"I am so discouraged that I have left off praying."

"Do you not know that we must not be impatient when we are kept waiting?"

"I was going to ask you to join me in praying that he might be brought in this year."

"I dare not limit God as to time; He only knows when and how to accede to our requests. He has a right to try our faith through years, if He pleases."

"Prayer has never been anything to me but a task. How can I help it?" was asked.

"By patient, habitual persistence in it; by seeking the aid of the Spirit, and in inflexibly securing time for

it. There must be meditation as well as prayer; you must reflect on your own wants and the wants of others."

"I should think it almost an insult to pray for others."

"An insult?"

"Yes; with such poor praying as mine."

"Is there any good praying done?"

"Is there not the 'effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous, that availeth much?'"

"'A lover of righteousness thou art; then thou art one of the righteous. If still thine own righteousness be in thine eye, it may and should be so to humble thee; but if it should scare thee from coming unto God, and offering thy suits with this persuasion, that *His ear is open*, . . . creep in under the robe of His Son, and offer it there.'"

"You do not know how little time business men have for contemplative piety, nor how hard it is to escape a cold, worldly temper."

"Perhaps not. But Luther once said, when a hard day's work lay before him, that he must pray twice as much as usual on account of it. Time spent in seeking for success in lawful occupation and enterprise, is far from lost time; time spent in praise is not lost time. And he who wants to lead a happy, holy, useful life, can only do it on one condition, the condition of daily communion with Christ."

"*Daily* communion! Oh, does any man ever attain to that?" cried Apelles eagerly.

"We read of having 'fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ;' we read also of the 'communion of the Holy Ghost.' I suppose the latter phrase refers to the Spirit as the Medium of the communion and fellowship between God and Christ and the human soul. Of spiritual strength and joy, this is the highest source."

"And do you mean that it is attainable by such poor, half-way Christians, as we?"

"Not while you are poor and half-way; but when you become whole-hearted ones. When a man prays, and has no response, but feels as if he had been addressing the ceiling of his room, not a personal, listening Christ, he may be sure that he is not in perfect spiritual health. For our Lord is always 'waiting to be gracious.'"

"I have heard older Christians speak of having great burdens of prayer for souls. Is it a bad sign not to know what that means?"

"Not necessarily. The Spirit inspires all prayer, and is not wont to lay these burdens on young shoulders. Your time may come; I hope it will.

"You *hope* so? Hope I may be burdened?"

"Yes, with our dear Lord's burden. It is a wondrous grace to be permitted to have fellowship with Christ in the burden He is carrying."

"Then 'fellowship' is not a merely contemplative grace, confined to the closet?"

"Ah, no! The believer has a union to his Lord far more real and personal, than that of the closet; to you, in your youth, it may look repelling. But I do not

propose to conceal from you that there is, for most of Christ's followers, 'fellowship with His sufferings.' Do not let this alarm you. At the longest, life is short; at the worst, it cannot harm His beloved ones, but will help to make sweeter the bread you are going to eat with Him in His Father's kingdom, and the rest you are going to take with Him in one of His many mansions!"

"My great difficulty is in finding God real," said Amplias.

"Well, tell Him so. He *is* real, and knows how to reveal Himself."

"And am I to fancy that God will alter any of His plans for my asking?"

"By no means. He took every one of your prayers into account when He formed His plans for you. Coleridge speaks of the act of praying as the very highest energy of which the human heart is capable—praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties; and the great mass of worldly men and learned men, he pronounced absolutely incapable of prayer. And shortly before his death, he said to his son-in-law, as we are told by him: 'I do not find or reckon, the most solemn faith in God as a real object, the most difficult act of the reason and the will: Oh no, my dear! it is to *pray, to pray* as God would have us—that is what at times makes me turn cold to my soul. Believe me, to pray with all your heart and strength, with the reason and will; to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice, through Christ, and verily do the thing He pleaseth thereupon—

this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare on earth. *Teach* us to pray, O Lord!' And he burst into a flood of tears, and begged me to pray for him. Oh, what a sight was there! And 'no prayer is lost,' said Bickersteth, 'they are lasting and living. It is a wonderful thought—*no prayer is lost*, they live for ever; they are, as it were, indented round the throne of God, and when God looks around, He sees the prayers of His saints covered with the sweet incense of the Saviour's merits.'"

"You do not represent the Christian life as an easy thing," said Apelles.

"I want to represent it exactly as it is found in the Word of God. We are there told that 'with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.' But these wells are deep. I want you to quit you as men, to be strong. I want to see you rich in faith, fervent in love, watchful unto prayer. You can fling yourselves down, if you please, by the shallow pools of life, and lap up of their muddy waters, and go away thirsty. But I beseech you never to do it. I entreat you, if you have not yet formed the habit of prayer, to begin it to-day. Go to God expecting to find Him. Refuse to let Him go except He bless you. I cannot speak strongly enough on this subject."

"Do you think that, young and inexperienced as we are, we should make much of intercessory prayer?" asked Amplias.

"I would have you pray as the Spirit gives you utterance. And I have another suggestion to make. There

is a special promise to social prayer—to 'two or three.' Remember that. It was when our Lord was praying that He received His baptism. It was when the apostles were praying that the Pentecostal blessing came down. Christ began His public ministry by prayer, and closed it by prayer. What an unanswerable argument against the worldly question, 'What mean ye, that ye pray?'"

"You have spoken of an 'inflexible habit of prayer,'" said Claudia. "May not some of these tender young consciences become painfully scrupulous in consequence? I know you do not mean that there will not be occasions in life, when the retirement of the closet will be impossible, or, if not impossible, selfishly appropriated."

"I thank you for the suggestion and endorse it. But remember, dear young friends, we make it to tender, scrupulous consciences; not to the cold, the worldly, the idler, who are on the alert for excuses to neglect duty."

"And, as you have been so reserved and cautious in speaking of prayer as a delight, may I not say to these young persons," continued Claudia, "that you pray, that I pray, not as a duty, but as one of our high privileges; a privilege we would not lose for all the honours and pleasures of life?"

"Say anything you please," returned Urbané, "and when you have told the story in vivid language, you know you have not told it. A soul that has felt the elevation of communion with God, will never be satisfied with lesser objects; every day it will thus obtain more of the mind of Christ, and 'change into His image from glory to glory!'"

"I want to make another criticism," said Philologus. "You have barely alluded to intercessory or to ejaculatory prayer."

"One short evening cannot do justice to the subjects under consideration. I can but hint at thoughts. I would lay great stress on intercessory prayer when it is given; great stress."

"Is '*given?*'" asked Apelles.

"Yes. Prayer is the gift of the Spirit. And the Spirit only knows what we should pray for. And as to ejaculatory prayer, I believe it to be the instinctive breathing of the sanctified soul, and needs no more to be taught as a doctrine, than a smile, a sigh, a glance into friendly eyes, should be taught. It is carrying a little corner of one's closet into the promenade, the public conveyance, the office, the workshop; it is transmuting the stones on which we walk into pavements of gold. It checks the harsh word and the unkindly deed; it brings instant counsel at the unexpected instant of need, and in everything it gives thanks."

"I have very little patience with enthusiasts," one broke in abruptly. "If a man can cure one disease by prayer, why is he selfish enough to let all other diseases run their course?"

"Now, is that quite fair? If it is, may it not be said, If one soul can be saved by my prayers, all souls can, and I'll convert the whole world at a blow?" asked Urbané.

"Well, why not? I know there are people who maintain that every true prayer is answered."

"Is it not?"

"Of course not. I have offered hundreds of prayers that were not answered."

"So have I," said Apelles.

"Everybody has," said Amplias.

"Pardon me if I deny that. True prayer is dictated by the Spirit, and the Spirit does not mock us by stirring us up to fruitless petition."

"Well, now," said Apelles, "there once lay before me two paths, and I did not know which to choose. I prayed for direction, and followed what I believed to be the Lord's choice. But it led to defeat and shame."

"This proves nothing. Our Lord reserves to Himself the right to answer our prayers in His own time and way. Now, first as to time. Must He instantly respond to our childish ignorance and impatience? Is our faith to be put to no test?"

"But there is a promise to two who agree upon anything, that it shall be given them. A young friend of mine, in circumstances of great temptation, asked me to join him in asking for deliverance. It was a pressing case; there was no time to lose; but no answer came, and he is struggling in that temptation still."

"May I ask if he is using all the means in his power to escape it? Is he literally fleeing from it?"

"No; I can't say that he is."

"'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' God *cannot* listen to a prayer that is not accompanied by a spirit of submission and obedience."

"Take another case then. A mother lay upon her sick-bed, her helpless little children about her. Her husband besought the Lord to restore her health; but He not only did not restore her health, but took her to Himself."

"Are you sure that this was a mistake on the part of our Lord?"

"I am not prepared to say that. But it was a most mysterious event. She was such a rare woman, and so needed in her family."

"No doubt. But if it had been best for her to stay, she would have been made to stay. We are fallible, human beings, and having prayed according to what light we have, must leave events to God. Would you take the responsibility of restoring that mother to her household?"

"N—o. But I want to know what has become of her husband's earnest prayers!"

"They are laid up in an immortal memory, and, in some form, will be answered. Their intent was for the best good of that household, and their spirit will meet with a response, though they were not answered to the letter."

On their way home, Antiochus said to Claudia, "Why did Urbané use such reticence on the subject of intercessory prayer?"

"Because he was addressing young persons chiefly, and their time for this sort of *work* has not fully come. I know that prayer for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and for the salvation and sanctification of souls, is his

almost exclusive business in his closet, while he knows that you and your brethren have errands there on your own account, which, for the present, must occupy most of your time. You will pass into higher and purer regions, when you will forget and lose self in Christ."

"Do you expect that in me?"

"Yes, I do, confidently."

"That means that you are praying for me, mother; and I thank you for it."

She turned her bright face to him with a smile, and said, "Do you know what a wonderful, wonderful thing it is for a human being to be permitted to speak to God, and what that speech of ours wins?

> "'Bubbles we earn with our whole soul's tasking;
> 'Tis only God that is given away;
> 'Tis only heaven may be had for the asking.'"

"Those lines hold a great thought," he replied, "and this evening has not been lost upon me."

CHAPTER XIII.

OBEDIENCE.

"THERE are two forms of obedience of which I want to speak to-night," said Urbané. "One is obedience of the life, the other that of the heart."

"External presupposes internal obedience," said Philologus.

"It does. One is receiving, the other doing God's will. And faith in Him is the only condition in which true obedience can be exercised."

"I do not quite see that," objected Apelles. "It may be my lot to have to part with something I greatly value. God is stronger than I am, and He can come and take it. I have to submit, because I cannot help myself."

"That may be mere dogged, sullen submission," returned Urbané; "but a stoic and a heathen may render that. I refer to Christian obedience. Take the case of Abraham. After promising to bless all nations through him, God, arbitrarily, as far as the human eye could see, directed him to slay his son—his only son—the son he loved. Abraham not only prepared to do it, 'but rose up early' for the purpose. And faith alone

enabled him to obey. 'He believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness.' It has been remarked, by some German author, that every one, in the course of his life, is called upon, like Abraham, to sacrifice his Isaac. Every one, then, if this is true, has an opportunity to learn what sort of faith and obedience he possesses."

"And learns it to his shame," said Amplias with some bitterness.

"Not always," said Urbané gently.

"Are there instances, at the present day," asked Apelles, "of such unquestioning obedience as that of Abraham?"

"There are. But they ought to be more numerous. God is constantly coming to His children, and laying His hand on this, that, and the other object with which they are reluctant to part. Now comes the query which they love best, the cherished object, or the will of God! There are many painful instances of struggle and rebellion, but there are also many instances of patient submission. Some one has said, 'Be not induced to give assent to that exaggerated boast, that, if the lifting of a straw could bring the beloved one back, we would not lift it. Some poor mourners have not the moral courage to contradict this, lest they should be thought wicked. But far from subscribing to such overstrained professions, we know, in our heart, at this period of our suffering, that if lifting a house could restore them to us, we would strain every nerve to do it.' Now, I have no wish to make any unkind criticism on this genuine cry

of a bereaved soul; but I must protest against its general truth. I have seen too much ready submission to the Divine will, in times of sorest bereavement, to subscribe to such statements. Everything depends on the state in which tribulation overtakes one. Christ became obedient to the death of the cross; He asks from us no such sacrifice; all He asks is a faith that shall trust Him in the darkness of night, as perfectly as in the brightness of noon-day."

"But does He always make the path of duty plain?" asked Hermes.

"He makes it plain, if we will let Him do so. But how few of us come to Him without passion, without prejudice, without pride, in simplicity and godly sincerity, and ask for direction, expecting to receive it."

> "I would be guided as a child,
> And *told* just where to go,"

said Claudia. "I believe," she added, "I misquote, but the sentiment is very sweet."

"Well, I have asked for direction many times," said Apelles, "and it has generally turned out that I did not get it. Can you suggest a reason?"

"Yes; half a dozen reasons. We often go to God for an expression of His will, and He gives the expression; but we are so taken up with our wishes and plans, are so wilful in our fancied submission, that we misunderstand Him. He rarely speaks to us in tones of thunder; His is the 'still, small voice.' After making

our petition, we should 'keep silence before Him;' the voice of passion must cease, or we cannot, amid its tumult, 'hear what God the Lord would say.'"

"Yes," said Claudia, "in the moment of clamorous entreaty, sometimes,

> "The music of Thy soft, low voice,
> We are too deaf to hear."

"I think I have always expected the voice of thunder," said Apelles.

"You must not expect to know all the Master's mind as soon as you enter His house," said Urbané. "An old servant who has lived under His roof thirty, forty, fifty years, ought to know His will far better than one who has served there five or ten. I once knew a man and woman who had had what the world calls a hard time, passing from trial to trial, sorrow to sorrow, with hardly any breathing-time. At last a new trial confronted them, and I looked to see their faith falter; but the husband turned to the wife, and said, with a *smile*, 'Well, we put our heads into the harness the moment the Master takes it down;' and so they encountered His will together, weary as they were, with much service and a long road."

"It all sounds plausible and easy, while you are representing it as such," began Apelles.

"Pardon the interruption," said Urbané; "but I never allow myself to gloss over, or present in false colours, any of the painful sides of life. I do not pretend that an habitual spirit of obedience, leading to habitual,

active obedience, is easy. On the contrary, it is another of those apprenticeships which, like the habit of prayer, is learned slowly and with difficulty. The strength of the human will is gigantic. And so is its presumption. It is bent upon managing its own affairs, if it can. Hardly a day passes when I do not hear murmuring and disputing against the Divine will that cuts me to the heart."

"But if we are to part with our wills," said Amplias, "what is to prevent our becoming insipid on the one hand, and stoical on the other?"

"We are not to part with our wills, for in doing so we could only render a negative obedience. We are to bend, not lose them. Neither are we to become stoical. We must suffer God's will as well as do it. He does not want to make slaves of us, but dear children, entering into His plans, cheerfully accepting what each hour brings: 'willing in the day of His power.'"

"It takes a long time to learn the true liberty of the sons of God," said Claudia. "But Paul knew all about it, when he said that, 'having nothing, he possessed all things.'"

"Did he mean that things owned by others, things of beauty, and the like, were virtually his?" asked a youthful voice.

"Oh no! His thought went far deeper. He meant that he who possesses absolutely nothing but Christ, in Him possesses absolutely all things. This is obviously his meaning who could say, 'I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ.' This is the cry of the sufferer,

but it is the song of the victor, to which I have already alluded."

"And do you expect, do you wish us, to 'suffer the loss of all things?'" asked Apelles.

"I wish and expect nothing for you but that you may be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ. I cannot choose your paths in life, nor should I dare to do it. Nor do I wish any good thing to be withheld or ruthlessly snatched from you. But this I know: that if you will trust your present and your future to His hands, consenting to let Him smite you when it shall be a kindness, to defeat your plans when they are wrong, to take you up, to set you down, to act for you in your own stead, 'all things shall work together for your good.'"

"I am like a cautious horse," said Apelles. "When I approach a bridge, I want to try it with one foot, before I venture my whole weight upon it."

"'Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding,'" Philologus hastened to quote.

"You want to walk by sight," said Urbané, "but you cannot do it. And while you are trying bridges over which multitudes have passed in safety, you are losing time and strength, and not progressing. I long to see you bearing your whole weight on this bridge of faith, crossing over it, and coming to the other side. I am truly and 'affectionately desirous of you.'"

"And suppose I do cross it," asked Apelles, visibly touched by tones that said far more than words had done, "what shall I find on the other side?"

"Faith and obedience shall find Christ," said Urbané with conviction.

"But if we give ourselves away to Him, there is no knowing what He will do with us," whispered a trembling voice.

"I wish I could convince you all how hard it is to kick against the pricks!" said Urbané. "I wish I could give each of you a good long draught out of the sweet cup of submission! Christ cannot abide in a heart that shuns and resists His work in it; and He loves so to dwell in one that opens its doors wide, asks Him to come in, and take anything, everything He pleases."

"It is hard for us, in our youth and inexperience, to realise the truth of all you say," said Amplias. "I am afraid I should rebel if some things in which I greatly delight were taken from me."

"Try, at least, to obtain a different temper. To be happy, to be useful, you must be one in will with God. There is such a thing as learning 'not to be afraid of evil tidings.' There is a love which uses no exaggerated language when it says:

'I *worship* Thee, sweet will of God!'

This is not mere blind submission; it is the joyful song of a faith that is mounting up 'on wings, as eagles,' and is not so much a victim as a victor."

"But how is one to obtain such victory of faith?" asked Apelles.

"It is no mushroom," was the reply. "Obedience is

not so much an act as a habit of the soul. The faithful servant is always on the watch, first to know, then to do, his master's will. Now, the events of life are not accidents. They are the unfolding of Providential plans. Every moment comes as God's messenger, and says: 'Do this'—'Avoid that.'"

"Are you not holding up a superhuman standard?" asked Apelles. "I am not asking in a spirit of criticism; I honestly desire to know the whole truth."

"Let us look at Paul, at the very instant of his conversion. His first word is, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' He is told that he is to suffer great things for Christ's sake, but he enters courageously on a career of hardship and deprivation and painful endurance. Yet he declares that he bore in 'much patience afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labours, fastings.' Again, he says he was 'strengthened unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness.' Read the story of his life—the long list of his tribulations, how he was made the very 'off-scouring of the earth'—and find, if you can, the feeblest expression of resistance or disobedience."

"I think it quite important to examine and study a whole life, in order to appreciate the temper that runs through it," said Philologus. "The whole history of Christ on earth preaches submission. 'Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' And knowing full well the meaning of the words, He taught us to make a spirit of obedience enter into our daily

prayer: 'After this manner pray ye—Thy will be done.'"

"I have not learned to say it," said Apelles.

"Neither have I," whispered a woman's voice.

"Let me plead with you, then," said Urbané. "'In Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.'"

"That language was addressed to the unconverted," said Hermes.

"True," said Urbané, "but it is equally applicable to a partially sanctified will. I long for the day when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in heaven."

"Will there ever be such a time?" asked Hermes.

"Christ would not tell His disciples to ask for something He never meant to give. There will be such a time. And if we, who profess His name, were all living in the spirit of that prayer, this would be the set time for Christ's coming. But our opposition to His will, our faintness when we are rebuked of Him, our eagerness to seek our own ease and pleasure—in a word, our selfish humanity—keeps Him away. Put by the side of His glorious utterance, 'I delight to do Thy will, O God,' the cry with which man would rend the skies, if he dared, 'I hate to do Thy will, O God!' 'I hate to suffer Thy will, O Most High!' 'Nevertheless not as Thou wilt, but as I will!' If it is living to and for itself, loving its idols more than its God and Saviour, the human soul will behave in a very human way in the hour of trial. But if, on the contrary, it is living in a spirit of faith and submission, it acquiesces

without a remonstrance. And this applies to the petty annoyances as well as the great emergencies of life. This is what I mean by obedience of the heart. And I want to urge it upon you, my friends. It gives me personal pain when I see the blessed and perfect will of God resisted. Nothing is gained by resisting it, for it will ride on and over us in spite of our puny struggles; everything is gained by yielding."

"Everything, save the one treasure we most desire to keep," said Helvia.

"But does it become us to want to keep what our loving and wise Father wants to take? Are we really fit to choose our own lot in life? Would you, if you might?"

"I never was put very sharply to the test but once," replied Apelles, "and then I certainly would have kept my Isaac, if I could."

"Well, my dear young friend, I trust the time is coming when you will entrust yourself fearlessly to Christ, letting Him give or take, wound or heal, according to His own good pleasure."

"I fear that time is very far off," was the reply, made in a despondent voice.

"The fact that you come here so faithfully, week after week, leads me to take a more hopeful view of the case," said Urbané.

"But are you not wearied out with our slowness and dulness, and want of faith?"

"Not in the least. If it should be necessary, I could

cheerfully spend a thousand and one evenings in ministering to your individual soul. I cannot forget that I have been, myself, slow and dull and weak in faith, and that my dear Lord and Master bore with it."

CHAPTER XIV.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

FROM time to time Urbané received notes from young persons, who dared not to speak at the weekly meeting, describing joyful experiences in prayer, and in the reading of the Word, and the like. His thoughtful brow contracted as he read them. He greatly dreaded excitement of feeling, or having too much stress laid on pleasant emotions. He wanted his young Christians to develop into a perfectly sound and healthful maturity, which should rather result in than be preceded by that delight which was now professed. Accordingly, he now spoke with unusual gravity and moderation, in this wise:

"I have spoken of faith working by love, or obedience of the heart. This evening, I announce a kindred topic, namely, obedience of the life, or good works. But before entering upon it, let me say that while I think I have given to peace, joy, delightful revelations of Christ to the soul, all the prominence they can reasonably demand, I then wish also to add an earnest word of caution. It is natural that they who are favoured with such spiritual delights should, in the proper time and

way, speak of them. But remember that it does not follow that reporting Christ's graces and favours is speaking of *Him*. And I should be glad to see self sink more and more out of sight, either as a mourner or as a rejoicer, and have your language testify rather what He is in Himself, independently of you, or anything He has done for or been to you. Read the Epistle to the Ephesians, and see how Paul struggles with human language, in trying to describe the love of Christ, which 'passeth knowledge!' How unconsciously he betrays his own personal devotion when he prays that they may be 'filled with all the fulness of God!' His soul had been down into the depths of this fulness, or how could he have known what to ask for his brethren. Go forth, my friends, to preach Christ as Paul preached Him, out of a great deep of experience and heavenly knowing; declare humbly that you have been in heavenly places with Christ Jesus, but say little about the places, and much about Him. Thus only can you disarm carnality of its subtle weapons; thus only can you decrease while He is increasing."

"This," said Hermes, "sounds a little like a contradiction of remarks previously made."

"Yet it is only such in appearance," replied Urbané, "and due to the fact that some quite young persons mistake certain ardours of emotion for genuine love to Christ, make professions not justified by their lives, and so dishonour Him. A little observation will convince you that a great deal of what is called religious conversation, is pious gossip; now I would have you so filled

with Christ as to *run over*, not in mere streams of talk, but in streams of benevolence. There is such a thing as a sound Christian life; it is not all contemplation and prayer; it is not all muscle and sinew. It is a perfect, practicable union of the two. I believe in your joyful emotions if they result in self-denying, patient work for Christ; I believe in your work if it is winged by faith and prayer. You may assure me that you have not time to pray to Christ, because you have so much to do for Christ, and I warn you that He will soon come and try your work, of what sort it is, and condemn it. You may say you spend so much time in meditation and prayer, that you have no time to do work of any sort; then I must assure you that you are mere enthusiasts, to whom Christ has not time to listen. Your frames and your feelings are empty bubbles, beautiful for a moment, to the eye, then gone for ever."

"But are there not persons who are unfitted, by illness, by want of education, by their position in life, perhaps even by constitutional traits, to show their faith by their works?" asked Apelles.

"That is a timely question, and I reply, 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' Now, this waiting being enforced, as in illness, for instance, may be done in two ways; in fretful impatience, or humble content. But let me add, further, that when I speak of work for Christ, I do not mean mere active labour:

> "Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
> Makes that and th' action fine;"

But she who is not permitted to perform even such a trifling act for Him, may glorify Him by accepting His will when it sets her aside. The sick-room has ten thousand voices with which to praise Him, and I do not care how illiterate you are, nor how obscure the position you occupy, love Him with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and you will find ways in which to serve Him as frequent as the sands upon the sea-shore. Why, the 'soft answer that turns away wrath,' is for Christ; the forgiven wrong is for Him; the cup of cold water is His cup. How beautifully He has told us these truths in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. Foreseeing how many of His lovers would never have great opportunities of doing specific work for Him, and knowing the eager craving there would be for service, He showed that what was done for the least of His brethren, was done for Him. This is one of His tender, loving forethoughts, about which I say, reverently, it is *just like Him!*"

"Do you think it the duty of every one who is up and about in the world, to be striving to win souls?" asked Hermes.

"I think it their privilege," was the reply.

"But some have no gift in that line. They repel where they would attract."

"I cannot believe that one who breathes the loving, winning spirit of Christ, will repel. There is a great deal of work attempted in a cold, hard way, that comes to nought, because it has no heart in it. Speak to a man about his soul from a mere sense of *duty*, and his intuitions tell him that it is so, and he shrinks back;

but go to him from some spot where you have prayed for him, individually, for a year, or years, take him by the hand, and just tell him that fact; in nine cases out of ten, you will see tears glisten in his eyes, and some out of these nine will tell you they have been longing for this Christian word."

"I have done very little of such work as this," said Apelles. "Consciousness of my own human infirmities has sealed my lips."

"This is an argument in favour of my urgent desire to see my church filled with holy men and women. 'Be ye clean who bear the vessels of the Lord.' One who is not 'purged from an evil conscience,' will hardly dare to do anything for his Master."

"But is not much harm done," asked Hermes, "by inexperienced, crude Christians, who rush heedlessly into the sanctuaries of human souls?"

"Undoubtedly. Therefore I want to rid my church of crudity and inexperience," replied Urbané with a smile.

"I have sometimes thought it would be well to explain why you devote so much time to instructing and building up young Christians. Of course I understand it, but many do not," said Claudia.

"I have often wondered, that as you considered us regenerate and so sure of heaven, you did not let us alone, and look after the impenitent," said Apelles.

"So have I," declared another.

"And so have I," said a third.

These disheartening remarks, which showed Urbané

how little he was understood, gave him a moment's uneasiness, but he put it by, and said, what he had said scores of times, "I am trying to keep the glory of God before my eyes, and every soul that I can lead into the way of holiness, will glorify Him in his own person, and become the spiritual parent of other souls. But to convert a sinner to the cold, worldly, formal life of the average professor, does God no honour; on the contrary, he who accepts salvation for its own sake, and lowers Christ into a celestial courier, will be a dead letter in His Church, having a name to live to Him, while living only unto himself."

"Holiness has always seemed to me to belong to those not immersed in business, and so free to spend their time as they please," said Amplias.

"God requires nothing from you that you really have not time to do. It is as much your duty to be 'diligent in business' as it is mine to be 'fervent in spirit.' But why should we not be both diligent *and* fervent? It is what we are told to be."

"Why, in the rush of business, a man forgets there is any God. He can't help it. It is in the very nature of things."

"There is another clause to the verse partially quoted, which will throw light on the question. 'Serving the Lord.' Now the difficulty with most men is this. They regard their secular work as one thing, their religious work another thing, and fancy that one wars against the other. But if your work is legitimate, necessary, then diligence, and fervour, and service form a harmonious

trio; in it *all* you may regard yourself as serving the Lord."

"This is so contrary to all my pre-conceived notions," said Amplias, "that I hardly know how to make any practical use of it."

"But do you not see the beauty and dignity of giving your whole day to Christ, instead of merely giving Him brief fragments of it?"

"But my business is so secular, so absorbing! It is not possible to be carrying it on while thinking every moment of Christ."

"Granted. But with the results of your labour, you support your wife and children. To do this, is it at all necessary to have their images always consciously present with you? You may absolutely forget them. But suppose some sudden calamity should sweep them all away, would not your zest in business die out? And would not this prove that you had been toiling, not for yourself, but for them?"

"Do you mean to say, then, that I am serving Christ in my vocation, as you are serving Him in yours? That going down town to make money is to be put on a level with specific work for souls?"

"I would not put the one on the same level with the other, by any means. I consider my privilege to be greater than yours. But all mankind cannot be Christian teachers. There must be business men in every community. Now I see no reason why the quality of your work should not be as pure and true as mine. It would be a melancholy state of things, if the Master

counted no men as His workmen, save those whose specific employment is of a religious character. The fact is that when He chose His disciples, Christ did not go into temples to find them in priests, or to altars to seek them among those who offered sacrifice or knelt as penitents there; He took them from the ranks of those who were working all day and sometimes all night, in absorbing, weary labour; 'they *toiled* in rowing;' He found Matthew at the receipt of custom; and that He did not draw these men about Him as mere devotees, is shown in the fact that after His death, some of them are spoken of as 'fishers,' with whose labours He had such sympathy, that even as the risen Christ, He condescended to instruct them where to cast in their net. Many a man whose life has become one long night of toil and failure, might be divinely taught where to cast in yet another venture, and draw to shore his hundred and fifty and three."

"I am glad you are teaching us to shun morbid piety," said Antiochus. "But it is very hard to get a true conception of sound Christian life, after years of confusion and error. Yet I believe Christ can be carried to the workshop, the counting room, the public arena, and glorified there. But this is a faith that has to struggle for life, because it is yet in its infancy."

"When God created man," said Urbané, "He did not say to him you are to spend your time in devout contemplation and prayer; He put him into a garden, and told him to 'dress and to keep it.' Since that day, thousands of men have been engaged in similar occupa-

tion; their labours are smiled upon and blessed by 'the Lord of the harvest.' Now, what business can be more absorbing than that of the agriculturist? Yet, if he be one of the family of Christ, he must, in some way, feed upon Christ or starve. And if he carries Christ about with him, in the mystical union which may exist between our Lord as He dwells within the soul, and the soul itself, he need not traverse an inch of his territory alone, or envy his brother whose vocation is on spiritual, not earthly soil."

"I begin to grasp the idea that one may serve God in even a secular calling," said Amplias; "but I want instruction on the subject of Christian work. How much time should be devoted to it?"

"No general rule can be laid down," replied Urbané. "How much owest thou to thy Lord?"

"*I* owe Him everything!" said Antiochus.

"And so do we all!" Urbané rejoined. "Now, the question I suppose to be this: not what is the very least I can do for Christ to pacify my conscience, but how much am I *privileged* to do for Him? And I reply: Just in proportion to your love may be your service. If you love Him as I want you to do, you will offer Him the whole use of your day, as you open your eyes to the light of each morning, to be spent in active service or silent suffering, according to His good pleasure. You will not select the most agreeable task, but *His* task, whatever it may be; you will not disdain humble service, or be ambitious for distinguished service; you will lie, like a straw, on the current of His will, to be

swept away and be forgotten, if it pleases Him, or to be caught up by His mighty hand and transformed thereby into a thunderbolt."

"Have you any suggestions to make to us women?" asked Claudia.

"St Paul has made most excellent ones," was the reply.

"Some of the young girls present are eager for a vocation," returned Claudia.

Urbané cast his eye pleasantly upon an attentive, but silent, group of maidens, and said earnestly—

"Woman's vocation is to love. I charge you to love the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart and soul and might and strength. Then you will be good daughters and sisters and wives and mothers; or if, in the order of life, you have no such mission, trust your Beloved to find one for you. You have His poor always with you, and His sick; you can gain access to His sufferers every day, as no man can do; He has His waifs drifting on the ocean of life; His penitent, fallen ones; His foundlings; His very lonely ones."

"That's beautiful work!" cried an enthusiastic voice; "but I owe Christ such a debt that I can't rest satisfied with just that; I am not content to comfort people in trouble, though I love to do it, nor merely to visit the sick, though I mean to do much of that if I may; but I want thousands of souls to love Christ through me; yes, thousands!"

Urbané took in the glowing yet earnest face in a quiet glance, but was, for some moments, silent. When

he at last spoke, it was with a struggle to conquer his emotions:

"Have you counted the cost, my Helvia?" he asked.

In a low voice came the steady reply: "I have!"

"Do you know how our Lord prepares the workmen who come to Him with such large desires?"

"No; but I can imagine it is by baptismal fire."

"And are you prepared for that?"

"No; but Christ can prepare me."

Urbané looked once more at the firm, unflinching face; he silently took the measure of this girl, whose very genius it was to live for Christ, if need be, to die for Him, and said, in a hoarse voice—

"So be it, my Father, for so it seems good in Thy sight! My child, you will have your thousands."

In these words he gave up all he had to his Lord. Of his household, this one daughter remained to him, and she was going to undertake a battle for souls. He could foresee, as she could not, through what training-schools she would have to pass before she could be ready for her life work; into what furnaces of fire she must be cast; what satanic assaults she must meet; into "what weariness and painfulness," what "watchings oft," what "labours more abundant," she must enter, and shrank back, yet pressed forward! Yet no unheard-of experience lay before the ardent girl. Thousands have "come out of great tribulation," whose history never arrested human observation, who never bore the name of martyrs, but who early offering themselves to Christ were silently accepted by Him, and in secret places,

unknown to the world, had been "taught in suffering" what they were one day to "teach in song." Perhaps they are not shown, in this life, the countless souls they have lifted out of the dust or elevated above the ordinary plane of existence. But long before they go home to get their reward, "there shall be no night" in the celestial city of their souls; "and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

CHAPTER XV.

URBANÉ AND ANTIOCHUS.

"I AM so interested," said Antiochus, "in the subjects you have been discussing, that I have come to say some things to you privately, that it is impossible to say in the presence of others. Am I intruding?"

"Not at all. I am delighted to see you."

"You know I am immersed in business, and hardly have time to think. I have been prospered in every way, however, and suppose I appear, to the casual looker-on, to be a happy man. But, in the strictest sense, I am not. My conscience is not at rest. On Sundays, when I have time for reflection, I spend weary hours in reviewing the week, and repenting the race I have been running; or, perhaps, I should say lamenting; perhaps I do not really repent."

"Repentance glorifies God; mere lamentation mocks Him. May I ask if you have any misgivings as to your state before Him? Any doubt that you are His child?"

"Well, I suppose I am a Christian."

"Do you not know that you are?"

"To tell the truth, I often have my doubts on the subject. Still, I suppose I am as good as the average Christian of the day."

"This is not a question of goodness. Nor is the average Christian to be your standard. Christ is the standard, and faith the only witness, through the Spirit, that you are in Him."

"If I am never to have a hope of salvation till I get it through evidence that I am exactly like Christ, then I shall have to live without it. I am un-Christ-like to an awful degree."

"Do you not remember when Christian became satisfied, by looking at his robe and examining his roll, that he was in a state of grace, he fell into a state of carnal security that led to the loss of his evidences?"

"What is one to do, then?"

"Rely upon no past experiences or present gracious signs within yourself. All these may be counterfeits of truth. Fix your eye upon Christ; believe that He has provided a way of salvation for you, and accept His salvation as freely as He offers it."

"But am I not to examine myself to know whether I am in the faith?"

"I would not have you careless and thoughtless as to your relation to Christ; but, on the other hand, I would charge you to look at yourself as rarely as

possible. Your search will never be rewarded by the discovery of a single virtue."

"What! Not if I become a saint?"

"What is a saint?" asked Urbané with a smile.

"A *very* good and holy person."

"Well, now, here are two persons. One of them says he is very 'good,' in the sense in which you use the word, if I understand you. He thanks God that he is better than other men—better, especially, than one standing by his side, and who is smiting upon his breast, and asking for mercy in the lowliest attitude. Now, I want to impress one thought upon you. True holiness does not see itself. It sees Christ, and is ever seeking Him. The more perfectly Christ lives in a human soul, the more lowly will that soul become."

"But I thought some self-righteous people"——

"Oh! we have nothing to do with mere self-righteousness. We have just looked at it in the Pharisee, and that glance is enough. I believe that holiness is to be the quest of every redeemed soul, and that there have been, and are now, saints upon earth, of whom the world was not, is not, worthy. But this means departure out of self into Christ."

"But I have read about the shouts of two or three men on their death-beds."

"Yes, shouts of joy as Christ was revealed to them in a new light; nothing more, nothing less. I wish I could so depict Him to you to-night, as to make you henceforth a wholly consecrated man."

"That word 'consecrated' repels me a little. A young man in the prime of life naturally appreciates and clings to his innocent pleasures; and the thought of giving up everything—well—I have put my hand to the plough several times and looked back."

"My dear young friend, do you mean that you have several times had an inward call to a holy life?" asked Urbané very earnestly.

"Yes."

"And what was the occasion?"

"The first time it was the death of a favourite brother. I loved him as my own soul, and for a time lost all interest in earthly pursuits, and sought refuge in religion. But it did not yield me much satisfaction, and as my sorrow wore off, I lost what little fervour I had had. The next time there was no occasion whatever. I was prospering in my professional life, enjoyed excellent health, and had a pleasant home. But I was not satisfied; not thoroughly happy. I had been too religiously educated not to feel that a man is born for something better than merely making money. That was the time when, as you may remember, I became interested in our Mission. I had yet a third impression as unaccountable as the second. And now I have yet another, but I know not whence it comes."

"Let me tell you, then, that four times in your history God has called you, by His Providence, and His Spirit, to come nearer to Him. Thrice you have resisted this appeal and grieved Him away. If you resist Him now,

He may never return; there is a last grievance which for ever silences His voice."

"Do you mean that I shall lose my soul?"

"I do not. If you have ever so little saving faith, you may yet get to heaven. But can you bear to think of being so mean as to accept Christ's sacrifice for you as your passport, and make no sacrifice for Him in return?"

"You make me ashamed of myself."

"I tell you, solemnly and tenderly, my brother, that you are called to holiness. I can interpret these inward monitions of the Spirit in no other way. And by holiness, I mean usefulness, happiness, everything the human soul can crave of what is highest, and purest, and best."

"All you say impresses me deeply. But you have no idea how worldly and cold I am."

"I think I have. It is no peculiarity of yours. I see the same features in many other lives. Shall I add that I have been expecting this visit from you?"

"On what grounds?"

"I want my church to be full of holy, praying, working souls. And I am, in a great degree, responsible for the way in which I train my young Christians, and this sense of responsibility drives me to my knees. For a year past you have been one of the objects of daily prayer. You are a thoughtful man; you are, I believe, a renewed man; but to do efficient work for Christ, you need a new experience."

"And what is that?"

"It is a work of the Spirit, which I should prefer you should be taught by that Spirit."

"Were you taught by the Spirit?"

"Yes."

"And how?"

"Through prayer. Your mind is in a state of confusion, and no human hand can restore it to order. I want you to wait upon God day and night till you find out what you need. Meanwhile, since he shall know of the doctrine, who does His will, live up to every particle of light you now possess.

"But let me put you on your guard on a point where you may err. There will be no virtue in your prayers that will entitle you to a blessing. There is a kind of praying that is nothing but mere legality. It is just as meritorious as for a beggar to ask alms in the street, or to offer his loathsome diseases for the inspection of passers-by. They may say, 'Why should we give to you?' 'Why,' he replies, 'because I have indulged you with a very disagreeable sight, and assailed you with clamorous requests.'"

"You have often said that we must form habits of prayer; but I never have. There is the rush to business in the morning, the pursuit of it all day; and when a man comes home at night, he wants to see his wife and children, and get his friends about him. You men of contemplative lives know nothing of our difficulties."

"So you think you have more to do than I?"

"Of course I have."

"Have you not a portion of each day that you call your own?"

"No; not of each day. But still, as a general rule, when I go home at night, my work is done."

"Well, my work is never done. But we will not discuss my case, in particular. Let me call your attention to the life of William Wilberforce, when he was a member of Parliament, and literally overwhelmed by his political and philanthropic labours. I do not know which is more striking: the amount of work he performed, or the spirituality with which he performed it. Now he owed this spirituality to prayer. If he could obtain time for it in no other way, he would rise hours before the world about him was awake, and study the Word of God, and take counsel of Him on his knees. His piety was so rare in those days, that his friends feared he had lost his reason. But a lady, after observing his life, said, 'If this be madness, let him bite us all.'"

"But I have always thought that persons who spent much time in devotion, unfitted themselves for active life."

"Listen to what our Lord said about prayer: 'Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father;' now was He addressing a few contemplative women or '*the* multitude?' Why, He was speaking to day labourers, to fishermen, to the 'common people' who were struggling with poverty; to women who had all their household tasks to perform, their children to

bear and rear. And He showed them what He meant by the word 'closet,' when He went to gardens, and mountain-tops, and desert places, in order to be alone with His Father. A praying heart will find a time and a place for devotion."

Let it not be thought that Urbané laid too much stress on the subject of prayer. During a pastorate of thirty years, he had learned on whom to depend as effective labourers in the vineyard of his Lord; they were invariably men and women who took much habitual counsel of God.

Let us now follow Antiochus to his home, and see what passes there between himself and his wife.

"So here you are, at last! I began to think you were going to spend the night," cried Junia.

"I should have liked nothing better. Urbané was so cordial and affectionate."

"What has he been saying? Is he going to make a saint of you?"

"It will take more than mortal man to do that."

"For my part, I think you are a very good man as you are. I hope you are not going to live up to any new notions."

"I believe I am going back to old ones."

"Mother would be delighted if Urbané could work upon me as he does upon you. But I do not see why people as young as you and I should be so very strict, and give up all our pleasures because old people do."

"If you heard Urbané talk, you would not think he wanted any unreasonable sacrifices."

"It is quite enough to hear him preach on Sundays."

"It is not enough for me. I mean, this time, to be in real earnest. I have tampered with divine things long enough."

"Well, you'll never be perfect in this life, so don't hope for it. A man with such a quick temper as yours, will have a temper to his dying day."

An angry retort was the instant reply, and for that night Antiochus felt himself defeated. But again and again the next day, Urbané's exhortations returned to him, and, in intervals of business, he felt himself moved in a way quite unusual to him. He contrasted his own barren, comfortless Christian life with Claudia's cheerful and useful one; her freedom from care with his incessant anxieties; and the contrast was not agreeable. He resolved to exchange his fitful, scanty, listless style of praying, for the habitual and earnest one, to which his conscience had long impelled him, but from which the tide of worldliness had long borne him. But this proved no easy task, and coming away, day after day, from comfortless attempts to approach a yet unreal God, he would have given up the contest, but that Urbané, ever and anon, dropped an encouraging word that sent him back to his closet. He had great faults of character which gave him increasing troubles, and the struggle against them almost always ended in defeat. He became more and more dissatisfied with himself, and longed for

a nameless something, he knew not what, that should lead to a new life. And gradually he was taught this truth: You have accepted Christ as your Saviour from eternal death, but not as your Saviour from present sin. The sword of the Spirit transfixed him then and there. He condensed his prayers into one petition which he urged upon his Lord with intense desire: "I beseech Thee to reveal Thyself to my soul! I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory!" And He who dictated this determined cry, responded to it. Christ was manifested to his soul in a light that well-nigh overwhelmed him. He was filled with astonishment at his past blindness and unbelief, and at the beauty and strength of the character now revealed to him. From this moment he received the witness of the Spirit, and was tortured with doubts no more. The old life of sinning and repenting ceased. He was filled with joy that was unspeakable. When asked to explain his experience, he could only reply, "I have seen the Lord." Truths, hitherto obscure, were now made as plain as day-light, and work for Christ, hitherto too much performed as duty, became a delight.

It may be asked, Was this man wholly *sanctified* at that epoch in his life?

He always took the ground that he was then put into new conditions for spiritual growth, nothing more. And being a mortal man, he had to learn his lessons of life like other men. But he was no longer in bondage to sin, and his conscience was comparatively at rest.

He had his thorn in the flesh that kept down his pride; he had his sorrows and trials; he made his mistakes, and had to bear the consequences. But peace became the marked feature of his soul. And no outward event ever disturbed it.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANTIOCHUS.

It may be asked what Antiochus gained at once in this new experience, and this is the reply: He gained a soul-satisfying view of Christ. He was for a long time so taken up with looking upon Christ, that the ordinary pursuits and pleasures incident to youth ceased to attract him, and as he looked, he began to change into His image. He gained full assurance of faith. He could thenceforth say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." Doubt was gone for ever. He gained an access to God in prayer that made his closet the most delightful spot on earth. And, while this world never looked so lovely to him, the beauty of heaven won his heart: to his mind that word meant Christ and holiness, and the more he possessed of these, the more he longed for them. His affections, hitherto reserved for a very few, began to flow out in all directions; he sought the society of those who loved Christ, as most congenial and delightful, but he also

sought out and laboured and prayed for souls uncongenial, because worldly.

His joy was joyousness personified. It grew first out of love to Christ, next out of assurance of faith; it was increased by hours of communion with God, and deepened by freedom from bondage to sin, and a new conception of the usefulness which would now be in his power.

As time passed, he found that, just in proportion to the degree of his faith in the risen and indwelling Christ, he was kept from sin, and while he was taught more and more how weak, infirm, helpless, sinful a thing is the heart of man, he was made to see all this set over against the strong, resolute, holy, loving heart of God.

While all this was going on, Junia's pride and self-will made her array herself against her husband, and she spoke to him as if Satan himself were prompting her to do so, and after this wise:

"You say you have had a marvellous view of the love of Christ to your soul. I have asked several really good people if they know what you mean by this, and they say they do not."

"But they can have it, and thus learn what is meant, if they will."

"It is a momentary bit of enthusiasm. You will soon come down from your sublime heights. Why should you set yourself up to be better or more favoured than the rest of us?"

"Am I setting myself up?"

"Of course you are."

"How?"

"Why, by boasting that God has done something for you that He has not done for me, for instance."

"Dear Junia, I am not boasting."

"You may not think so, but you are. And why should such special miracles be wrought for *you*, in particular?"

"Why, indeed! I shall never cease wondering. After all my disobedience and ingratitude, I deserve wrath, not love."

"Ah! now you speak like a man in his senses. I supposed you thought you had only entered into your rights. Well, Urbané has got a good deal to answer for, if he alienates you from your wife, and that I shall tell him."

"I never loved you so dearly in my life; never."

"You have been taking a strange way of showing it; shutting yourself up instead of giving me your society, and then going to assemblies I hate, and into which I cannot accompany you."

"I acknowledge that I have, for a time, shut myself up. But it was in response to the invitation of the Holy Spirit. I dared not resist it. And now I want you to come and get the new view of Christ that has been given me. You will say, as I do, that you never knew what happiness meant before."

"I was a proud and happy wife when you suddenly

broke loose from me and joined yourself to these fanatics. But now I am miserable, miserable; and it is all your doing."

"My dear child, these are no fanatics. You have always said you loved Urbané, and believed in him."

"I loved him as long as he let us alone. I was willing to leave him to his notions as long as he would leave us to ours. And now I know he'll never rest till you set up a prayer-meeting in our parlours, and go to telling your 'experience,' and having people here to tell theirs; exactly what I can't endure."

"I shall do nothing of the sort, unless you yourself propose it. Dear Junia, why are you so bitter? I never saw anything of this sort in you before."

"I can tell you another thing. If you set yourself up to be so very good, you'll have dreadful things happen to you, I shouldn't wonder if every one of our children died. I have heard of such things. I have heard of four children lying dead at one time, in one house."

"You are getting so excited that you do not know what you are saying. I ought not to argue with you on a subject you do not understand."

"I do understand it. I saw a letter written by a man who said he had been trying to catch a fever, thinking it might be blessed to his soul. Oh, now you are laughing at me. It is true, I've seen the letter.

And you will be wanting me to die, or to have something happen of the sort."

Antiochus looked troubled, but would defend himself no more. Junia returned to the attack whenever she got him alone, but had the argument all to herself. Then she changed her ground, and declared:

"This thing will not last."

"Time alone can prove that. But Urbané had an experience exactly like mine more than thirty years ago, and his peace has been abiding."

"Urbané is not perfect, or infallible either."

"Nobody knows that better than he does."

"But he ought to be, if he started in such a marvellous way as you say you have."

"He says so himself. But he also says he never wants to reach a state in which he cannot say:

> 'This is the hidden life I prize;
> A life of penitential love.'"

"I like that. Can you say the same?"

"Yes, dear Junia, I can. Wherever the very lowest place is, into that I want to creep."

"To *creep?* Why, I thought you were all the time on the wing!"

"When I think of Christ, and of what He is, and what He has done, and is doing, I do feel on the wing of love and praise. But when I think of myself, I see nothing but human weakness and folly, and so the less I see of myself, the happier I am."

"But that is cowardly."

Antiochus smiled, with a fresh, bright smile, but made no other answer. Thus far Junia had not been able to irritate his hitherto passionate temper, and this was beginning to shake her confidence in her own position.

She said every provoking thing she could think of, hoping to catch him, sometime, when off his guard. But weeks and months passed, and she had to own to herself that some mighty change had taken place in him which she did not understand. Could it be that he had not been renewed until now? But that he had been a religious man from his youth up, she could not honestly deny.

And the two who loved her best, who would not obtrude their experience upon her, went on praying for her in faith, in humble silence, their lives a reproach, but their lips uttering not even an exhortation. This, as has been remarked, had ever been the habit of Claudia, and she taught Antiochus to follow her wise example.

And now that his temper had become so subdued and gentle, and his whole character so elevated and purified, Junia began to be tortured with a new fear. He was going to die! That was what it all meant! She could see it as plainly as daylight; and so, in an agony of remorse, she told him.

He replied, "If this were so, Urbané and your mother ought to have died thirty years ago, and so should

thousands of others. But the truth is, one gets preparation to live when he gets this clear view of Christ as his Saviour from sin. I hope to live and preach Him for years to come."

"You are going to leave your business to preach Christ!"

"No, I am going to stay in it, and try to preach Him with my life. It is time to see Christian moderation, probity, and manliness in the very temple of mammon itself."

"Well, I have misunderstood you altogether. I feared you had got a set of pious feelings that would soon die out; I did not know that a higher principle of duty was to be the result. Forgive, if you can, all my unjust, unchristian attacks upon you, and pray that I may learn what you have learned. I never knew, till of late, that I was loving you and our children in an idolatrous way; but under the pretence that a wife and a mother could not be too affectionate, I just as truly worshipped you all as if you were so many images of gold. I love you *passionately*, and Christ coldly; that's the living truth!"

"And the time has been that I craved, and revelled in, this devotion. It was a mystery, and a study, and a flattery, and a delight. I did not realise that this was your attribute, as a woman, but took it as my due. But that day is over, and I can truly say that, while I could not give you to any human being, I can give you, not only without a pang, but with joy, to Christ."

"To die, do you mean?"

"He never would ask me to give you up to death without a pang. He does not aim at the destruction of humanity, but at the destruction of what is false and depraved in it. All I mean is, that to see the affection in which I have rioted, given nobly and faithfully to Christ, would be a pleasure, not a pain."

"I do not understand. You never were so affectionate to us all as you are now."

"I know it. And it is the legitimate result of the change wrought in me. And I hope my Lord and Master will never rest till He has completely dislodged the old life of self, by bringing His own life into my soul."

"Well, now, I want to ask you one question, once for all: Do you expect to become perfect in this life?"

"I have said, once before, that I never expect, and do not wish, to reach a state that will lift me above a life of habitual caution, self-distrust, and growing humility. Urbané says that real and healthy growth in grace sets self-complacency at defiance."

"If the time ever comes that I think you perfect, shall I tell you so?"

"Oh no! You never could look away down into the hidden depths of my heart. And I do not believe that, if sinless perfection is ever attained in this life, it sees and talks about itself. I think its instincts would teach it wise silence. But I may see cause to

form new theories. Meanwhile, let us follow on to know the Lord and His truth."

"Isn't it rather mortifying to have to acknowledge, as you are virtually doing, that you have been wrong all your life?"

"Do you think a blind man, suddenly restored to sight, spends his time in expressions of mortification at his past infirmity? Is he not too much absorbed with the new world of light on which he has entered?"

"Well! are you not afraid of what may happen to you?"

"'What time I am afraid, I will trust in God.' I have still a natural shrinking from pain. If you should raise your hand to strike me in the face, I should as instinctively wink as ever I did in my life. But that would not hinder my turning to you the other cheek."

"When I think of the possibility of your dying, or of our losing the children, I am filled with horror. I know I never could bear it."

"God does not give His grace to meet our *imagined* evils. I have no doubt He will enable you to bear any real sorrow or trial He sends to you. How often we hear the remark made by the afflicted, in the time of greatest pain, 'I am a marvel to myself!' Dear Junia, do not try to feel every step of your way; give yourself generously to Christ, without asking any questions or making any stipulations."

"I have given myself to Him."

"I know it. But there are times when He calls for new consecration; and I think His Spirit is now speaking within you. I have not sought this conversation, or any we have hitherto held, for, until God's full time is come, it is worse than useless to attempt to move a soul. But, from the outset, you have, from time to time, led me to speak."

"A single instance of self-control, when you have been under provocation, affects me more than a year's steady exhortation could. I believe in lives more than I do in talks."

"So do I. But if one may never speak, either with tongue or pen, how many lives will an ordinary life reach? A score, say, at most; one's household, one's very intimate friends, one's frequent business associates. Now, I am not content thus to limit my grateful testimony to what Christ has done for me. I want to elevate Him in the eye of every human being He will permit me in any legitimate way to reach; for all He has done for me, He is longing to do for thousands."

"But you will get very little thanks for your pains. People will resent your interference, or laugh at it."

"Of course. On the other hand, some who are groping their way through the world with unlighted candles in their hands, will be glad to hear where I got mine lighted; it is a very simple thing to tell

them, and implies a mere fraction of wisdom on my part. And when they once get theirs lighted, their eyes will be too dazzled to look at me, and I can drop away into my real insignificance."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INDWELLING CHRIST.

"ALLUSION has been made, more than once," said Urbané, "to the mystical union of Christ with the believer. But several of you desiring to have the subject again brought up, I gladly do so, trusting to be forgiven, if I repeat myself. Martin Luther said, 'If any man knocks at the door of my breast, and says who lives there? my answer is, Jesus Christ lives here, not Martin Luther!' What a quaint, what a wonderful utterance! This union, as we have seen, is formed by faith. As soon as it is formed, the old man begins to give way before the new Man, Christ Jesus; there is no longer a struggle for holy acts and holy sensibilities, for these come naturally and peacefully from a pure Fountain."

"How is this consistent with the fact that sin is seen in the Christian long after his conversion?" asked Hermes.

"Christ enters the soul in regeneration, but the old man, with his affections and lusts, is still living, and

determined to live, if he can. To die to self is not an agreeable process. The life of Christ in the believer is, at first, in most cases, kept feeble by the tenacity and strength of this old life. Sin struggles for the supremacy, and still holds such sway, that, instead of going on his way rejoicing, man goes burdened, fighting, falling, doubtful whether so much evil can exist in a redeemed nature. It is true that the first sense of pardon is frequently the source of great joy; but this joy is usually short-lived. To be told that he is forgiven past offences, but that he is never to have his freedom, gives only temporary satisfaction to a galley-slave."

"I cannot honestly say that Christ lives in me," said Amplias.

"If you are His, He certainly does."

"But I have no satisfying sense of this."

"That does not change the fact."

"Since I began to attend these meetings, I have been led to make some changes in my habits. I hope I pray more, for one thing. But the burden of sin grows heavier and more painful."

"As you advance in the divine life, you will feel it more and more. It is no exaggeration to say that 'one sinful wish may make a hell of heaven.' As the conscience becomes enlightened, views of transgression become changed; the law is what it always has been, but man's position relative to the law is undergoing constant alteration. There is the difference of day-dawn

and full noon-tide; what was dimly displayed by the one, is revealed perfectly by the other; so that what once seemed a mote, is now felt to be a mountain."

"But Christian's burden fell off when he saw the cross," said Apelles. "Should not ours fall, likewise?"

"It is exactly to that point I am now coming. Christian became a regenerate man when he began his pilgrimage to the celestial city. But he had seen Christ in so dim a way, that sin was still a heavy burden to him.

"But the moment he saw the cross, his burden rolled off his shoulders: Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said, with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death.' Then he stood still to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burthen. He looked, therefore, and looked again, till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now, as he stood looking and weeping, behold three shining ones came to him, and saluted him with 'Peace be to thee;' so the first said to him, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee;' the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment; the third also set a mark in his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give in at the celestial city. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing.

"Now, very few get such a view of the cross at conversion as removes at once the burden of sin, and yet they must get it, or be all their lives subject to bondage. And if any of you are not enjoying the sweetest peace of conscience, this is, no doubt, what you want."

"But did not Christian, soon after receiving his roll, lose it?"

"Yes. He fell a victim, as too many do, to a fit of spiritual pride. Instead of continuing to look at Christ, he looked, with pleasure, at his new robe, and studied up the proofs of his piety in his roll. And in this self-satisfied state, he fell asleep, and did not perceive that in these idle moments he had met with a loss that could only be replaced by penitential, weary retracing of his steps. Now many Christians spend a large portion of their lives in this very way. They get into a 'good frame,' and then fall to admiring it, making it the ground of their hope; they imagine that all is now going well with them, and sit down, at their ease. But before long, this security gives way before a lapse into sin, which is followed by painful doubts and misgivings. They retrace their steps, eager to recover their 'evidences,' and after a weary struggle, recover them under the influence of another 'frame;' then the old story is repeated. Can anything be more comfortless than such a life?"

"How can one get out of it?" asked Apelles.

"By receiving Christ, by faith, into his soul. The

union is mystical and indescribable, but we may put implicit belief in it, because we are taught it in the Word of God. Just in proportion as Christ lives in the soul, self goes out, and with it, sin; just in proportion as self goes out, Christ comes in. Now He is held in the soul, as He was received, by faith. Leighton says:

"'Faith so looks on the death of Christ, that it takes the impression of it, sets it on the heart, kills it unto sin. Christ and the believer do not only become one in law, so that His death stands for theirs, but one in nature, so that His death for sin causes theirs to it. They are baptized into His death.'"

"This is a great mystery," said Amplias. "I fail to grasp it."

"It is far better to know it, practically, than to form theories concerning it. A blind man may have very fine conceptions of objects he has never seen, but these conceptions will be the mere creation of his fancy. One instant of open vision would sweep it away."

"You said once that Christ lives in every renewed soul," said Apelles, "but that He lives more completely in some souls than in others. Now how is one to get into perfect union with Him?"

"Earnest desire for it is one of the first steps. Earnest prayer will be the legitimate result of desire. And the Holy Spirit who formed, will continually be making the union more and more complete."

"I have always regarded the language of Christ on this subject as metaphorical," said Amplias.

"Try to get a conception of a 'spiritual Christ,' a 'Christ mystical,' but real; and let metaphor go. We want no metaphor in our souls; we want a Person. And we want this Christ to come and live in, and feel, and act for us; we want to be able to say, in sublime contradiction, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'"

"Is not such language a boast?" was asked.

"Boasting is excluded when Christ fills the soul; and until He does fill it, no man dares say, 'Christ lives in me!' I think I may venture to use an illustration that may make the subject clearer to those of you who look so perplexed. You understand what the Bible means when it speaks of a man as 'possessed with a devil.' You know it means that he acts and talks, not like himself, but like an evil spirit; and you charge his rude, and violent, and malignant behaviour, to that spirit, not to him.

"Now, suppose a soul be *possessed by Christ!* It will cease to speak its own words, or to think its own thoughts; it will come under the perfect dominion of Christ's nature, and His sacred image will shine forth from it. Once it loved to have its own way, but now He has His way. It once shrank from every form of suffering, evading it by every possible expedient. Now it not only is patient in tribulation, but glories in it. Where it delighted to sing its own praises, it delights

to hear His. Where it sat comfortably at ease, it now endures hardness. Where it was once harsh, and uncharitable, and envious, it is now brimming with love to all men. But all this is Christ's work, not his; so he has nothing wherein to glory, and nobody feels that more than he does."

"Was it to this you referred when you said that you hoped to show us that provision had been made to secure our peace?" asked Amplias.

"It was. A soul just in the degree that Christ dwells in it, is free from the distractions and turmoils which once tormented it, for it acts quietly, under divine direction, not according to its own wayward, feverish will. It is free from an accusing conscience, and has the sweetest peace. And this is a peace which nothing but a lapse into self can disturb. No sorrow destroys it; in fact, there is a joy born of sorrow that is as unique as it is marvellous."

"Let me now read to you," he continued, "a striking passage from an old writer, Bishop Hall, or 'Joseph of Norwich,' as he signed himself:

"'Here is a spiritual marriage betwixt Christ and the soul. The liking of one part doth not make up the match; but the consent of both. To this purpose, Christ gives His Spirit; the soul plights her faith; what interest have we in Christ, but by His Spirit? what interest hath Christ in us, but by our faith?' Again, 'There is more in the Christian than thou seest; for he is both an entire body of himself, and he is a limb of another more

excellent; even that glorious mystical body of his Saviour; to whom he is so united that the actions of either are reciprocally referred to each other. For, on the one side, the Christian lives in Christ, dies in Christ, in Christ fulfils the law, possesseth heaven: on the other, Christ is persecuted by Paul, in his members, and is persecuted in Paul afterwards by others; He suffers in us, He lives in us, He works in and by us; so thou canst not do either good or harm to a Christian, but thou doest it to his Redeemer, to whom he is invisibly united. Thou seest him as a man: and, therefore worthy of favour, for humanity's sake; thou seest him not as a Christian worthy of honour, for his secret, and yet true union with our Saviour. I will love every Christian for that I see; honour him for that I shall see.'"

"You must be well aware," said Amplias, "that few of us know what it is to have Christ possess our souls."

"Is it not something to believe that He can, that He is willing to do it?"

"Yes, it is. But I want to realise it in my own experience. I begin to long for Christ."

Likewise also said they all.

"It rejoices me to hear this," said Urbané, looking with parental affection upon the little group. "And I beg you to regard this longing as a gift of the Spirit. Cherish it, and it will become resolve and purpose. You must not rest till you have learned in blessed

experience what it is to have Christ *abide* in you. But in order for it, you must be willing to give up everything that can disturb the union. He is quick to perceive disloyalty, and will make you sensible of this; as He gave up all for you, so He expects all from you, the whole price you owe Him; your body, soul, and spirit."

"This would be a sort of crucifixion!" said Helvia, with almost a shudder.

"It is worth all it costs, my child," said Urbané tenderly.

Helvia cast down her eyes, and was silent. She loved Christ; He was living in her; she could not forget what He had been to her. But He had been partially dethroned by an earthly idol, and she was not willing to give up either.

The struggle in her mind had been going on very painfully for months; a cup, innocent in itself, had been put to her lips; she longed to drink it; but the drop she had tasted had disturbed her religious peace, and he feared she might lose Christ altogether if she went on indulging herself. Nor was she struggling alone. Nearly every one present had some plan, some pursuit, some habit, some idol, which it was hard to relinquish.

After the meeting, Helvia nerved herself to speak to her father of what was passing in her heart.

"Father," she said, "you know what it is to be

bereaved of friends by death, and I know you have been a great sufferer. But you were able to bear it because you love God's will so. Did you ever lose a very precious thing by your own act, rather than His?"

"Yes, my beloved child, I have."

"Did it hurt dreadfully?"

"Yes, it was very painful."

"Are you glad or sorry, now that it is over?"

"God never took anything from me that He did not replace by some better gift; I never voluntarily gave Him anything I now wish I had kept."

"But you suffered?"

"I suffered; yes; but shall I tell you what has cost me infinitely more pain than any loss?"

"Oh yes!"

"It is what I have kept."

Helvia remained standing silent a few moments longer, then bade her father good-night, and retired. He did not know what was passing in her mind, nor did he even ask her, but he prayed for her mightily, entreating her Lord to stand by her in her hour of conflict, and keep her true and loyal to Himself. Day by day he watched her with such sympathy, that his heart ached for her, physically. And, by degrees, she came forth from this trial of her faith, with her love to Christ so intensified that she could waver no more.

Ah, how little we are called upon to sacrifice for Him, in comparison with the opulence with which He rewards us!

CHAPTER XVIII.

JUNIA.

THE soul of Junia was in a sad toss. Her pride, her love of power, were brought to bay. Antiochus had been hitherto led by her, and now he had escaped from under her hand. And his happiness was so exuberant that it ran over, and found its vent in their children, to whom he was becoming a perfect fascination. They were all boys and girls together; his cares had taken to themselves wings, and he was so set free from self that he had time to enter into all their pastimes, and to sympathise with all their little grievances. Those inexperienced in the divine life, and who have morbid views of it, fancy that religion is all sacrifice and austerity. But it really requires nothing to be renounced that is worth the keeping, nor does it dwell in the cloister or hide in the cell. It may seem somewhat singular that, with such a bright little mother about her, Junia could fall into this error; but she had not penetrated into the principle that ruled Claudia's life; she thought it was *mother's way* to be sunny and happy, not that it was the duty and privilege of every redeemed

soul to be "glad in the Lord." Antiochus was, therefore, a great mystery and study to her; she could not reconcile the earnestness, and enthusiasm, and tireless energy with which he worked and prayed for souls, with the glad boyishness with which, between whiles, he played with the children. But there is nothing so fresh and happy as a holy heart; and such a heart was unfolding new graces every day in this changed man.

Junia was neither thoughtless nor prayerless; she was not specially conceited or ill-tempered, or selfish, but she was an *idolater;* and this she was coming more and more clearly to acknowledge to herself. All her life long she had now this, now that idol, on whom she lavished an intensity of devotion, graciously accepted by the favoured object, from whom she never won a tithe of what she gave. This may look like an amiable weakness, rather becoming in a woman than otherwise. But if amiable towards man, it is not loyal to God. In the divine union, typified in the Word by the marriage relation, Christ is a jealous Lover; He wants the first place in the heart He has died to redeem, and has a right to want it. It is His voice that declares that whoso loveth aught more than Himself, is not worthy of Him.

"But," it may here be objected, "did not God give to this whole-souled, true-hearted woman, the love that she lavished so prodigally upon her friends?" Yes, it was His gift; but to use a gift is one thing, to abuse it another. And Junia had this yet to learn, and, since she would have it so, learn it painfully. The disease so

much dreaded by young mothers crept into her nursery, and laid her flowers low. It looked as if her four children were to be snatched away at one blow. Such things, alas! have been. Junia could neither sleep nor eat. Her heart rose up and defied God. If a resolute will and absolute self-sacrifice could save life, she was determined to save these. In vain her mother and husband besought her to wait patiently on the divine will. Her constant cry was: "*I cannot give them up! They must not die!*"

Antiochus left his business and shared all her cares. Claudia, with an aching heart, but with unshaken faith, brought all her experience and courage to the rescue. Above all, they prayed, and so did many and many a loving friend. But this was the fashion of their prayers: "If it be Thy will, spare these precious lives;" while Junia's cry rang upon the Divine ear, in the unqualified demand: "Spare them unto me, spare them, spare them!"

At last her prayer appeared to be heard. One by one, step by step, her darlings came back to her. She snatched them triumphantly from the jaws of death, and pressed them with intenser love to her passionate heart. And she felt a certain gratitude to God for sparing them to her, which led her, for a time, to more love and obedience than she had ever known. But she was too full of earthly treasures to have much room for her Lord, and soon returned, though with an uneasy conscience, to the round of duties and pleasures

of her hearth and home. There was much that was womanly and Christian in her outside life. She made the household wheels move very smoothly; everything about her was delicate and dainty. Antiochus could want for nothing, nor could Claudia. Junia was a loving daughter, as well as a devoted wife and mother. She read the Bible to her children, and spoke to them of Jesus. She gave alms generously, and supplied many an invalid with luxuries from her own well-ordered table. But she was not perfectly happy. She knew she had not the faith and love that shone in the lives of her mother and husband, and that no one was to blame for this save herself.

There was a great storm gathering in her sky, but she wist it not, and walked securely on. Now her head was full of household cares, then there were the children's wardrobes to arrange. She entered her closet every day, but those cares and interests went there, too. In the very midst of solemn petition came an idea how to trim this garment or that hat; a wonder whether this child had best go to school or not; the memory of what such a friend said and another did. She rose from her knees, abashed, but thankful that this duty had been done, and that she was now at liberty to pursue the devices and desires of her partially renewed heart.

Another of the foes with which childhood has to contend crossed the threshold of her nursery. It was an inconvenient, rather than an alarming, disease; still,

with her usual self-reliance, Junia determined to face and fight it. She would not entrust her darlings to the servants; they might sleep too soundly, and neglect them. So, though Antiochus begged to share her nursery cares, she gaily refused him the privilege, and, secure in her youth, and health, and strength, went to spend her nights, like a good shepherd, among her lambs.

Everything progressed favourably. When a child coughed ever so lightly, she sprang nimbly from her bed, raised it up till the paroxysm was over, laid it down again, with a kiss, folded the coverlet carefully over it, and fell asleep in two minutes, to be aroused, perhaps, in two more. At last, this disturbed sleep began to tell upon her, and so did her anxieties, for the children were losing their food and wasting. The storm is creeping on; to-night it will burst!

Junia sleeps soundly, heavily, as one exhausted; one child coughs, then another; she starts up in confusion, hardly able to open her eyes; now they are all coughing terribly.

"Poor things, I must stop this!" she says.

O Junia! not that bottle! Not that!

Is there no guardian angel near enough to snatch it from your hand?

"Here, darling, take this; mamma cannot bear to hear you cough so; and you, my precious one; and you, my little pearl; and you, my bit of sunshine; down with it, like a brave man!"

If she had only let God take them, instead of putting them away herself!

Antiochus awoke early, and crept softly to the nursery to look after his dear ones. Junia was sleeping quietly; he rejoiced to see her taking such sweet rest. He glanced at the children; they, too, were asleep. He returned to his room, and was in the midst of the prayer it was now so delightful to offer, when he heard the sound of a body falling to the nursery floor above. He was there in an instant. Junia lay in convulsions on the threshold, a small vial clasped in her hand; he wrenched it from her, and read its fatal label!

CHAPTER XIX.

PAIN AND SORROW.

EVERY one was struck with Urbané's appearance as he announced this subject. He looked pale and fatigued, and yet heavenly.

"I have chosen to speak, this evening," he said, "on subjects naturally repugnant to the inexperienced. Handled unwisely, they turn to us only a dark, repelling side. But they have their bright side as well, and he who has found it may henceforth walk in the light thereof.'

"Pain may be experienced by the infant of a day. Perhaps the fact and penalty of sin never comes home to us so closely as when we see a young and fragile life thus assailed.

"'A Christian child in pain!
Oh, sad, amazing thought!'

We stand appalled at its side. It has never sinned. Why should it suffer? It cannot understand what is

befalling it; no moral or spiritual results can come to it through this channel; to what purpose, then, it may be asked, this waste? There is but one explanation. The cold shadow of the cross lies upon even the tender limbs of infancy; the child is born to suffer, because it is born to sin. And as infancy ripens into boyhood, and the boy becomes a man, the cruel shadow lengthens and deepens. He does not suffer mere physical pain. He becomes introduced to grief. He did not seek this introduction, and the face of Sorrow is one in which he sees no comeliness. He shuns her, he hates her; he would flee from her if he could. If he recognises her as God's messenger, he has hard thoughts of God. He cries: 'What have I done, that I should be thus afflicted? Why should treasures be given me at all, if they are to be wantonly snatched away again? Could I not have avoided this blow? If I had done this, that, and the other, could I not have averted it? Life was so pleasant, I was enjoying it so much, I thought God was good and kind, and now I find Him vindictive and cruel."

"Isn't it natural to feel thus?" asked Apelles.

"It is natural. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. To the unsanctified soul, pain and sorrow are problems it vainly strives to solve. The voice of nature is absolutely silent before these awful mysteries."

"But the voice of grace does not always satisfy even a regenerate soul," said Apelles.

"That, alas, is true! The character of God is so dimly understood, that even Christian believers, or those who call themselves such, 'charge God foolishly.' They may not dare to say, in so many words, 'this ought not to have been!' but they say it by indulging in grief most inordinate, by putting on gloomy expressions of countenance, wearing sable garments, and withdrawing from the most innocent pleasures of life, as if nothing were now left to enjoy."

"Does not great sorrow naturally create indifference to all else?"

"Here we have the word 'natural' again, and I reply yes. But let us look a little into the design of our Father in chastising us. He has a right to be believed, for God cannot lie, and He says He chastens because He loves us."

"To punish us for our sins," said Amplias.

"Not so. The righteous suffer, sometimes, more than the wicked. Our Father sees in the human heart much that is sinful, crude and worthless, and which is not only offensive in His eye, but would, in time, be the source of great trial to itself. He says, I will cast this heart, with all its imperfections, into My furnace and burn away its dross. It will, at first, be amazed that a loving Hand could do such a thing, but I will do for it yet greater things. I will step into the furnace with it, and declare that I am going to stand by it till My work is done.

"If, on my doing this, it turns upon and upbraids,

and contends with Me, I shall perceive that the furnace was not hot enough to burn up the unsanctified will, and I shall make it hotter; so hot that pride shall melt away in that fervent heat; so hot that the stubborn will shall become a silken thread by which I can lead it whithersoever I please. Yea, I will so subdue the man, that he will fall down on his knees and bless Me for this trial by fire."

"Oh, do you really mean that one can thank God for pain? Pain against which every instinct revolts?" said Amplias.

"Millions of souls have come out of great tribulation, and are now praising Him for all they endured on earth," was the reply. "For while thus enduring, they were gaining strength for coming conflicts, and becoming equipped for the work of life. Sorrow has revealed Christ to them as even Joy could not do. He has shown to His sufferers that tender, sympathising love that has won their love. And their sharpest pangs, their darkest days, their deepest wounds become so associated with His voice and His smile, that they count those pangs, those days, those wounds dear unto them. Faith grows best in the dark. It then strikes its roots down deep, deep, deep; they interlace the roots of being already there, and grapple with every weakness and folly. In time a mighty forest springs up; fainting, suffering men and women flee to its shades and find shelter; birds of inconceivable variety and beauty sing upon its branches, and enliven its solitudes. Its evergreen boughs adorn

the Christmas festival; its massive trunks form ships that can traverse oceans, and bring home treasures more priceless than rubies; it becomes a sanctuary where God is worshipped, and the hymn and the anthem resound in its aisles. Suffering has its majesty and grandeur; it stands side by side with Christ, in fellowship with Him, and takes part in the same."

"Should we seek it, then?" asked Amplias.

"By no means. That would be presumption."

"I have heard people do it."

"Oh no! you misunderstood the petition. Prayer is from the Spirit, and the Spirit dictates no presumption. What you refer to was, no doubt, something like this. 'Lord, I am so resolved to be entirely Thine, that I come to Thee, and entreat Thee to make me such, and to do it in Thine own way, and on Thine own terms. If I have any idols, take them away. If I delight in any object that intrudes between me and Thee, make it odious to me, or snatch it from me.' Another design of our dear Lord in afflicting His children, is to give them a noble opportunity to glorify Him. Suffering borne in patience, submission, and faith, testifies of Him. It says, 'It is the Lord, let Him do unto me as seemeth to Him good.' 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

"This remark throws light," said Hermes, "on a point that has greatly puzzled me. I never could understand the afflictions sent upon persons who were already

so holy as to seem to me to need no correction. It was said, just now, that the truly subdued soul comes, in time, to love chastisement; how does this agree with the cry of our Lord, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me'?"

"Grace does not so harden the heart that it cannot feel suffering, and instinctively shrink from it. Christ's *humanity* was for a single instant appalled by the bitterness of the cup set before Him. For He was not only to bear the burden of the sins of the whole world, but all its sorrows also. No wonder He recoiled from it! Yet it was but a momentary recoil. With His next breath He recalled His own prayer, 'Save me from this hour,' and cried, 'But for this cause came I unto this hour.'"

"There is no doubt that a soul that has never been down into the depths, and cried out of those depths for a Rock on which to plant itself, only partially knows Christ; only partially understands life," said Philologus.

"I am sure of it. I love to misquote, and say—

> "'The love of Jesus, what it is,
> Only His *sufferers* know.'"

What does a child, who has never had a sick day, know about the great deep of his mother's heart? Sweet relations exist between them, but there is nothing unique in those relations. But let him break a limb, or be cast

upon a sick bed, and lo, she becomes, as it were, his sole property, giving herself away to him as if he alone existed on earth. Her tenderness, her strength, her love, her sympathy hover round him; she cannot do enough to show how she appreciates his sufferings. And when, sometimes, in the height of his pain, he refuses any ministrations save hers, she lavishes them upon him day and night with a most munificent hand."

"And he does not need to enlarge upon his sufferings in order to excite her sympathy," said Philologus. "His pathetic cry, 'O mother, mother!' tells the whole story; and there are times when a suffering soul can say no more, need do no more, than utter the beloved name of Christ, to bring Him nearer than any elaborate prayer of prosperous days had ever done."

"Take special heed to what we say, young friends; for we have learned these attributes of our Lord in times of sore pain and sorrow," said Urbané. "Looking at us, take courage as you face the unknown future. Christ said, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' And never spake He a truer word; He has overcome it. 'Ah, what beautiful things Christ has shown to me through the medium of this bereavement,' said a Christian father, weeping over the memory of his first-born child."

"You are getting out of my depth here. I never lost a very near and dear friend," said Apelles.

"But you have had great trials."

"Yes, I have been stiffnecked and hard to rule; and have had to be taken in hand."

"I have had to part with very dear friends, and never once could see the reason. And that made it so hard!" said Amplias.

"We must let our Lord manage His kingdom according to the counsels of His own will. There is no reason why we should understand His motive for this and that act. It is best we should not. 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it'—not 'I was dumb, because I knew Thy reasons.' Take a little child a few years old, and undertake to explain to him all his father does. His reason cannot grasp the explanation. Now, the wisest man on earth is a child. He is not capable of comprehending the deeds of a God. His position should be simply one of trust. Suppose you are very ill, and send for your physician, and he begins to discourse about remedies in a scientific way, and in language you cannot understand; would you not say, 'Apply the remedies, and cure me; I need no explanations as to why you do this or that.' He may reply, 'But some of my remedies will be very painful.' 'Yes, but I want to be healed. You are my physician; you must use *your* methods, not mine. If I could have cured myself, I should not have summoned you?'"

"But some of God's ways look very mysterious," said Apelles.

"Of course they do. They *are* mysterious. He has a perfect right to be a God who 'hideth Himself.'"

"Yet 'His secret is with them that fear Him,'" said Hermes.

"Well, now I want to ask one thing. Could the children of Israel have gone right into the promised land?" asked Amplias.

"Undoubtedly."

"And can Christians go right into theirs?"

"Certainly."

"Then why do they not?"

"They will not take God at His word."

"Do you mean that we should not be led through a wilderness, unless we choose to be?"

"Yes."

"That we need no trials or sorrows?"

"I am not prepared to say that. What I do say is this, that it is inconsistent with the character of a God of love to provide no way for His children to pass through life except in an ever-retracing path through the mazes of a wilderness. If our eyes are blinded by self-love, and our wills are only partially subdued, we shall be slow to see and accept God's way; but that is our fault, not His."

"And what is this way?"

"Christ. He says, 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.' He has not come to save us merely from eternal death. He has come 'to save His people from their sins.' But if they will not let Him do it, they will

have to stumble through life under much humbling and proving discipline."

"I had always supposed correction presupposed sin, and wondered what secret error some really good people were guilty of, that they were so afflicted. But I see my mistake. And I see, too, that if at the outset we so receive Christ as to be enfolded in His righteousness and to abide in Him, we shall not find this world a perplexing wilderness, although we meet in it with sorrow," said Hermes.

"Ah, my brother, flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you!"

"Yet I still see men as trees walking."

"More light will come as you get your eyes opened. I want to call your attention to another point. To be unhappy is one thing, to suffer is quite another. Remember that the soul, though 'sorrowing,' may be 'always rejoicing.' The character of God is in nowise altered by what He sees fit to inflict upon us, and the loyal soul will be true to Him, even while He seems to be slaying it.

'Trouble, dear friend, I know her not. God sent
His angel Sorrow, on my heart to lay
Her hand in benediction, and to say,
"Restore, O child! that which thy Father lent
(For He doth now recall it) long ago."
His blessed angel Sorrow! She has walked
For years beside me, and we two have talked
As chosen friends together. Thus I know

Trouble and Sorrow are not near of kin.
  Trouble distrusteth God, and ever wears
  Upon her brow the seal of many cares,
But Sorrow oft has deepest peace within.
  She sits with Patience in perpetual calm,
  Waiting till heaven shall send the healing balm.'

"He who cannot understand these lines has some very precious lessons to learn," said Hermes.

"Hear this!" said Urbané: "When nearly ninety years of age, Dr Daniel Chaplin was informed of the sudden death of a son, in whom his heart was bound up. A burst of agony broke from every one in the room save the aged father. As soon as he could speak, he said, in a subdued tone of voice: 'I think I can say I am truly thankful that I had such a son to give back to God.' He then opened his lips, and for an hour spake with a calmness, a clearness, an eloquence, that I have never heard surpassed. It was the man, the father, the minister, baptized by the Holy Ghost. This was not the result of insensibility. From that blow, so calmly received, he never recovered.

"And listen to this: 'If I know the meaning of the word sorrow, I also know of a joy a stranger intermeddleth not with.'

"'It is worth being afflicted to become intimately acquainted with and to learn to make use of the Chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely, the Brother born for adversity, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'

"This is the testimony of Lady Powerscourt," said Urbané. "I wish there were more like it. And the Bedford tinker—a tinker, and yet a prince!—says: 'Were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble, for the greater comfort's sake.' This is one of the Christian paradoxes, which they who cannot understand must accept on testimony. No man can use such language, whose aching heart has not 'leaned hard' on the great, sympathising Heart that was bruised for our transgressions. And hear this testimony from a dungeon under ground, called 'Little Ease,' in which the prisoner could neither stand, sit, nor lie down: 'To have knelt, I could not; no more, I fancy, could Jonah. But I could pray as well as he. That was the first gleam of inward light; and after that it grew. Aye, and grew till I was no more alone, because God companied with me; till I was no more an hungered, because God fed me; till I thirsted no more, because God led me unto living fountains of waters; till I wept no more, because God wiped away all tears from mine eyes. Ere I came forth, I would not have changed Little Ease for the fairest chamber of the queen's palace, if thereby I had left Him behind. It gained on me, till my will grew into God's will, till I was absolutely content to die or live, as He would; to be burned in Smithfield, or come home and clasp you all to mine heart, as should be most to His glory. . . . . I had left hoping for change; I only thought how *very* fair and sweet the house of the Father would be after this.'

"God has yet another design in His afflicting providences. It is to teach us sympathy," he continued—

> "'Old and young all brought their troubles,
> Great and small, for me to hear;
> I have often blessed my sorrows,
> That draw others' grief so near,'"

repeated Hermes.

"And it is only an act of Fatherly love and kindness, when He weans us from our habit of leaning on earthly things."

"What do you consider the true attitude in which to meet sorrow?" asked Amplias.

"I would have it met, first, in faith—'This is the will of my Father.' Second, in submission—'Thy will be done.' This spirit silences complaint, and in time brings perfect peace."

"I have seen persons give way to grief in a manner that made them a psychological study," said Philologus.

"And they throw away thus one of those opportunities of life for which they will be called to account," added Urbané. "Immoderate indulgence of grief; selfish disregard for the sufferings of others; an assumption that one is the chief mourner on earth, is a sight most painful to behold. It springs from want of personal love to Christ, and can find its cure in that alone. The eye of faith beholds—

'A golden stair, like that of old, whereon
Fair spirits go and come;
God's angels coming down on errands sweet,
Our angels going home.'"

"But suppose one has not faith to see the 'golden stair,' or 'God's angels' coming down upon it, what then?" asked Amplias.

"Let him wait upon God till he does. And here I want to make a suggestion. Never judge of the sufferings of another by what you see of them. The bitterness of his heart is known only to Omniscience. Step carefully when you enter this unknown land, and respect the regions you may never explore. Many a life that, viewed from its surface, appears to be as that of other men, has known disappointments marked by no outward token, and bereavements revealed by no gravestone. The untold tale is the tragical story of a bleeding, broken heart; see to it that yours shall never be the hand that thoughtlessly reopens those unsuspected wounds."

"That is a timely word. We wrong each other sorely in this regard. Perhaps there are few things more painful than that—

'Not even the tenderest heart, and next our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh.'"

"Yes. And this makes the sympathy of Christ so precious. He knows the otherwise utterly unknown."

"And while the eyes of men are holden, that they see not what we suffer, Christ is leaning over us, and tenderly binding up our wounds," said Hermes. "My friends, I came near throwing away a great sorrow, but after four years of dogged, sullen, hopeless pain, my heart has been melted by such love as I never conceived of. Having been one of the saddest, most misanthropic of men, I have become one of the happiest."

These words, very modestly and quietly spoken, made a marked impression on all present. They knew with what hardness he had borne his sorrow, and it was inspiring to see the ice melted.

Especially was Urbané's heart gladdened, for he had prayed for Hermes every day during those four years, in patient faith, and he knew that Stephanas had done the same. He left his seat, and crossed the room, to give to Hermes the right hand of fellowship, and several others followed his example.

"One of the most melancholy errors of life," he said, resuming his subject, "is, to use the language of our brother, to throw away a sorrow. Christ loves sufferers, and when, through pain and sorrow, He sees them cut off from outward sources of peace and rest, how He hastens to their relief! He comes to the stricken soul, sick almost unto death, but yearning for Him, and gives Himself to it in a depth, a variety, and an opulence of grace, to which no illustration can do justice. It grieves

me to see this truth put out of sight; it hurts me to have that great, sacred Heart wounded; I want to get in between it and the blow aimed at it."

"So do I," said Philologus. "And I love to tell afflicted souls that, 'though weeping endure for a night, joy will come in the morning,' and that that morning will be Christ."

"Listen to the words of one now in glory," said Urbané:

"'We must keep in mind how very short life is, and how little difference it makes what changes befall, or who goes first, or who is spared to stay behind a little while alone. It is only the difference of one rising in the morning a little earlier, and the other lying and sleeping a little longer. We shall all be up and abroad in a short time, enjoying the morning sunshine. Whether the bed be harder or softer, the room smaller or larger, the night darker or lighter, in this brief interval, is not of much consequence.'

"A friend narrated to me this incident: 'Visiting a glass-house, she observed upon the floor, among rejected and broken fragments, a number of objects of graceful shapes, and partially decorated with great beauty.

"'Whence this rejection?' she asked.

"'Each of these objects revealed a flaw,' was the reply. 'Some nice engraving had been done upon them before it was discovered that they were not worth ornamenting, on account of weak spots. Now, here are others that would

bear any amount of work, and you see how beautiful they are as the result.'

"'Yes,' was her silent thought; 'thus the Almighty hand begins to engrave His own image on human souls; some have courage and strength to bear His painful processes, and become objects of spiritual beauty even in His sight; but others give way, and He has to cast them aside.'

"And they become useless vessels!" said Urbané. "I hardly know a sadder fate. 'Not to be afflicted, says Bishop Hall, 'is a sign of weakness; for, therefore, God imposeth no more on me, because He sees I can bear no more. God will not make choice of a weak champion. When I am stronger, I will look for more; and when I sustain more, it shall more comfort me that God finds me strong; then it shall not grieve me to be pressed with a heavy affliction.'

"I have chosen this subject to-night," he continued "to stay and strengthen my own heart, and to prepare yours for a painful announcement I have been asked to make to you."

Here Urbané broke down, and it was several minutes before he recovered himself. He then resumed, with a trembling voice:

"It may not have attracted your notice that some of our number are absent to-night. I have spent nearly the whole day in a house of such mourning as is rarely witnessed in this world. Those lovely

children of our beloved brother, Antiochus; they are all gone!"

A murmur of surprise and sorrow fell from every lip.

"The tragical and awful side of the story remains to be told," continued Urbané. "It is so painful that I tell it reluctantly. The poor mother administered the wrong medicine last night, and this morning found them sleeping that sleep from which there will be no waking till the morning of the resurrection. I need not ask you to pray for those aching hearts."

"Oh, how can they bear it! It will kill them all!" cried a weeping voice.

"Claudia and Antiochus are very quiet," replied Urbané. "They are like little weaned children, and forget themselves in their sympathy with Junia, whose sorrow is awfully intensified by self-reproach. She is in a very critical state, and her physician says she will sink unless she sheds tears. But, thus far, her grief is stony and despairing."

It is needless to add that many a tearful prayer went up that night for the afflicted, sorely-smitten household, or that, as the news spread abroad, many who knew not Junia, entered into her sorrow as only sanctified hearts can enter. The whole city was moved, and every Christian man, woman, and child in it "went and told Jesus."

This is one of the charms belonging to the household

of faith. Each member of the family makes the cause of his brother his own. The sanctified heart loves its neighbour as itself, and is one with him in his sorrows, so fulfilling the law of Christ.

CHAPTER XX.

JUNIA AGAIN.

HER tragical story is no fiction. No one has a right to *invent* such harrowing tales to move human hearts. We shall have to drop a veil, for a season, over a grief that is too sacred to be intermeddled with, but years later we may venture to step noiselessly into Claudia's room, whose name, it will be remembered, is "Peace," and talk with her of the past.

She is older, her hair is whiter now, but her hands are busy with some work of mercy.

"Yes," she says, "it was very dreadful. My poor Junia! But God has been very good to us; He always is to the troubled. For a long, long time Junia did not shed a tear. We trembled for her reason. But one day, Antiochus, who had kept up, for her sake, came upon a little row of empty shoes, that, as it afterwards appeared, one of the servants had ranged against the wall of the nursery, hoping this touching sight might unseal the locked fountain of the mother's breaking heart. For a moment it completely unmanned him, and he went down

to Junia, hid his face in her lap, and cried his heart out there. Then her tears burst forth in torrents. She shed so many that a new alarm sprang up; we began to fear she would wear herself out in the tempest. It was piteous to see her stony, and silent, and sad; but it was piteous to see such floods of weeping."

There is the sound of some one groping at the door; Claudia hastens to open it and lead in a pale, wasted form. It is Junia; she does not see us; she is blind. "Yes," as she says, "*she has cried her eyes out!*"

But though there are signs of the battle-field in her face and figure; though her visage is marred and its beauty gone, there is a new light in it. She has found Christ, in her bitter sorrow, as she never found Him in the day of prosperity, and she is not afraid to say so. She has the "oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

"Mother, dear," she says, "they have almost all come; had we not better go down, now?"

They go and we follow. What do we see? The parlours Junia once took such pride in adorning, are opened now to a little company, each with a Bible in her hand. Junia has nothing in her hand; her Bible is in her heart. Now that she has lost her eyes, she has become a great student. A faithful attendant reads to her, day by day, from the Sacred Book; she ponders and prays over it, and gathers her friends about her, and tells them her thoughts. How they love her! How sweetly and beautifully she expounds the truth! How

she talks about Christ, and His love and sympathy, till tears gather in their eyes, and they go home resolved to follow Him as she follows Him, and know Him in the serene joy with which she knows Him!

May we pity her? May we say we are sorry for her? No; we may envy her, for she is for ever at rest. When she went down to the very depths of the sea of life, she found treasures there, beside which "no mention shall be made of coral or of pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies." "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." But the fearless foot of a woman has climbed to that path, and what she has found there "cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof."

Let us listen to what she is saying about it.

"Dear friends, never think of God as a vindictive Being. We often oblige Him to afflict us, but He never does it save in love. He knows that we shall never find true and lasting happiness save in Himself, and He tries, in every possible method, to convince us of this. But we are refractory, or we are stupid, or our eyes are dazzled by some sparkling earthly object, and we refuse to believe what He says. Then there is nothing left for Him to do but to take away whatever blinds or deludes us. No earthly friend would have the courage; but God is as courageous as He is loving, and we shall bless Him for it throughout eternity."

Thrice happy Junia! "Dying, behold you live; you are chastened, and not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor (in spirit), and making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things;" what more can heart desire than to be able to say, as you can say,

"CHRIST LIVETH IN ME."

CHAPTER XXI.

HELVIA.

We must now retrace our steps and glance at Helvia. When we last saw her, she had passed through a great temptation, by the grace of God had wrenched her heart off from its object, and come out into the clear daylight of His countenance. And in her love and enthusiasm she means to fly to heathen lands, to preach Christ as she fancies she cannot do at home. Is she right?

Claudia was in her usual place, and very busy, when after an eager knock, and her own "come in," Helvia entered with a firm footstep and an animated face. After an affectionate welcome, Claudia looked at Helvia with a questioning smile.

"I have come to tell you all my plans," was the reply. "It is so nice to have you for a friend, because you can always give me a morning when I want it."

Yes, Claudia always *could*, because she always *would;* that was the whole secret of her apparent leisure.

"Well, my dear," she said.

"You know—no, you don't know, but it is true—I have very special reasons for loving Christ."

"We all have 'special reasons,'" said Claudia, as Helvia paused here.

"Well, mine are *very* special, and I want to do a very special work. And my father has quite consented to let me sail for India in the autumn. There is such opportunity for woman's work there, among those gentle, much-abused Hindoo wives. I shall get access to them at first through fancy work, of which, it is said, they are fond, and then I shall talk to them about Christ, and I know I shall make them love Him."

So saying, Helvia took from a little basket on her arm, various specimens of fine needlework, and exhibited them in a bright, artless way.

"Isn't it nice that I am naturally skilful with my hands?" she said. "It will give me such chances with those poor women!"

"Dear Helvia," said Claudia, "do you consider that your going on a mission would involve neglect of another important one?"

"You mean to father? Yes, I have thought of that. But I have his full consent."

"No doubt. But you leave him, just as he is entering on advancing years, to the care of strangers. Strangers will minister to his last wants, and close his dying eyes."

"I have thought of that, too. But father is held in such love and reverence by his people, that he would not suffer for want of tender services in his last hours.

Dear Claudia, you are the last person to throw cold water on Christian service."

"Perhaps so. But you are the child of Urbané's old age, and in the natural order of things, he will go home to his reward, while you are still young enough to become a missionary."

"But suppose he should live to be very aged?"

"He would need you all the more."

Helvia looked down, and was silent. It is hard to the young to fail of the sympathy for which they are eager.

At last she said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple!"

"Yes, dear, those are the words of our blessed Lord, it is true, and very strong and impressive language it is, too. But try to look at the case impartially. What would you say if Antiochus should persuade Junia to go with him to a foreign land, and leave me, at my age, alone?"

"The cases are different. You are a woman, and need protection."

"But your father is a man, and needs love, and only a relative can give that. I know of nothing more helpless than an old man living among people who take care of him for hire. God answered my prayer when He took my husband first. I could do without him, but he could not do without me. It would have been very

dreadful to go and leave him to be nursed, in his declining years and last illness, by any hands but mine. A woman can attach herself to other women; as she grows old she can make sons and daughters out of her young friends; she has a score of ways in which to find recreation and pleasure. But take an aged man whose working days are over, and shut him up to his books and his loneliness, and you furnish a sad spectacle indeed."

"Father is never sad. He loves Christ too well."

"I am speaking of the time when bodily infirmity may require feminine service. You surely would not give him in charge of a man?"

"Why not?"

"For the same reason that you would not choose a man to take charge of a little child."

"Are old people so helpless? I had not thought of that. Father requires no care now, and it did not occur to me that he ever would need attentions that ought to have love, not money, in them. But I confess you have put things before me in quite a new light. Well, a bright dream is dispelled, that is all!"

"It is a great thing to learn to accept a very insignificant place in God's kingdom. Holy ambition to do great things for Him is very natural. But since you make a mother of me, Helvia, I ought to act like one. And I have long been praying that you might not be deluded into neglecting one duty for the sake of another."

"I did so want to be a blessing to many, many, many souls!"

"And why may you not? Is a foreign field the only one in which one can work?"

"I had such a fancy for this particular field," said Helvia, regretfully.

"Ah, but we have to give up our fancies, and do what God pleases. And you can find any number of useful occupations, if you love Christ, and are always on the lookout for them."

"I do love Him! I love Him so that I hoped He would trust me to go and talk about Him to—oh, I don't know how many people!"

"Well, are there not heathens in our own land?"

"Yes, there are, and I'll go on a mission to them!" said Helvia, brightening. "I don't know how I ever came to think of such a thing as leaving my father; especially after all he has been through."

"Yes, he has been unusually bereaved. Unusually."

"And hasn't he borne his sorrows nobly? I don't believe that even you, Claudia, know what he has gone through."

"No one can perfectly read the heart of another," said Claudia thoughtfully. "But I know, only too well, what he lost in your mother. And you are very like her, Helvia, and may be an inexpressible comfort to him. I hope nothing but death will part you two."

"Claudia," said Helvia abruptly, "I have not told you the whole truth. Perhaps you would advise me

differently if you knew all. Will you never, never, never betray me if I tell you my heart?"

Claudia only smiled in reply.

"Excuse me," said Helvia. "I ought not to talk to you as if you were a school-girl. Well, one reason why I want to go to India, is to avoid temptation here at home. I have resisted it once, but it may recur."

"Faith is better than cowardly flight," said Claudia. "If you put yourself right into Christ's hands, He will take care of you, especially when in the path of duty. You might escape this particular danger by running away from it, but it seems to me you would be safer and happier if you would run into Christ's arms."

"I have done that," said Helvia earnestly, "and He has taken me and kept me."

"And He will go on doing it."

"Will you pray that He may?"

"Yes; every day."

"Perhaps I ought to tell you what my temptation has been. Two years ago, visiting at the house of a friend, I was thrown into the society of a young man who I never dreamed could inspire me with affection for him, because he was not a Christian. He had noble traits of character, however, and attractive ones; before we knew it, we loved each other. Oh, what a bitter, bitter moment it was when I found myself loving a human being more than I loved Christ!"

"You did not love him more than you loved Christ?" said Claudia solemnly.

"Yes, I did. For a whole year I never put on a glove, or fastened a shoe, without reference to his taste in the matter; I was completely swallowed up in him. But when he proposed marriage, I refused him."

"Why?"

"Dear Claudia, you know why. I could not marry a man who did not love Christ. Still, there was the temptation. He said he did not want to have a worldly wife, that he honoured me for my religion, that he had wealth with which I could do good to my heart's content, that he never would interfere with my plans of life—oh, I don't know what he did not say! But I never owned to him that I loved him; he does not know it; but though I have torn him out of my heart, he is there still; should we be thrown together again, I might waver. Now you have the outlines of the whole story. Do you still say, stay at home?"

"Yes, dear child, I still say it. You love Christ better than you love this friend, better than you love yourself; you may be further tempted, but you will not fall. It would not surprise me if the stand you have taken for your Lord, should lead to a gracious work in the soul that has had such a hold upon yours."

"Whether he ever becomes anything more to me or not, I do pray for his salvation," replied Helvia. "But I never meet him if I can help it, and he little knows what he has cost me."

"He has cost you much, but has he not brought you, also, great gain?"

"Yes, he has. I never felt my feet so firmly planted on the Rock of Ages, as I do now."

Helvia walked slowly home, pondering over what had passed. "Father promised me my thousands," she said to herself, "and how am I to reach them, if I give up this long-cherished plan? But I *will* give it up."

She went straight to the study, and found her father there.

"Are you at leisure? Can I have a little talk with you?" she asked.

"Always at leisure for you, my precious child," said Urbané.

"I have been telling Claudia about my plan," she said, "and she thinks I should do wrong to go and leave you, and has made me think so too."

"But I have given my full consent, dear Helvia, and it was a cheerful consent too. We really need only one thing to make us happy. And I have that; and no man can take it from me."

"But the time will come when you will need my care. Because you never have needed it, it did not occur to me that this would not always be the case."

"I shall not live to be a very aged man," was the reply. "Your mission work would only be deferred, not relinquished. I think, myself, that if you are willing to do it, you may wisely stay to see the last of me," he added, with a smile.

"You will be very glad to go when the time comes."

"Very glad. Meanwhile I am very glad to stay in the harness, and hope I shall die in it."

Helvia smiled. She was courageous, and death did not look terrible to her. She could look far beyond it.

She fell back, now, into the quiet routine of domestic and social life, and to the ordinary eye appeared to be little more than a good daughter and pleasant friend. But every day she was growing stronger in the Lord and in the power of His might. Certain sharp features of her very fine character disappeared, and gentler graces shone out. Urbané never had had such comfort in her as now.

But she never went to India. She used to say, playfully, years later, that she had too many little Hindoos of her own to go to foreign lands to look for work. And these Hindoos cost her a great deal, and taught her a great deal; and in training them, and enduring all the suffering and self-denial incident to bearing and educating a household of children, she learned lessons that sank deeply into her thoughtful mind. She was not herself permitted to win the thousands of souls she had longed for, but through her sons she won them. It is enough for a woman to be a Christian, a wife, and a mother; in each sphere she may glorify her Lord and Master, and if perfect in these relations, she is just as dear to Him as her more accomplished, apparently more

favoured sister. It is the duty and the high privilege of some women to stand almost, if not quite, on the walls of Zion; but she who is not called to such eminence, should not, therefore, despise her own modest task. God bless mothers, especially young mothers, who are in the thick of the affray. They are ashamed to rank their daily difficulties, disappointments, fatigues, and responsibilities where they ought to rank, or carry these trivial details to Christ. But that which helps to form character, is not trivial in His sight, and these innumerable battle-fields are under His loving charge.

CHAPTER XXII.

PEACE AND JOY.

"REPEATED allusions have been made," said Urbané, "to peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost, but I wish to dwell upon them more specifically this evening. I have tried to point out to you the paths that lead to this rest and delight of the soul, and now let me add a few words to those already spoken. I believe in a faith that keeps the soul in habitual rest, month after month, year after year. And it is no mere negative, but a real, positive experience, casting a softened sunlight over the whole landscape of life."

"But we surely see eminently holy persons suffer, and suffer keenly," said Amplias.

"True. But unless their relation to God and to Christ is changed, peace in believing is still undisturbed. Take, as an illustration, the case of a husband and wife, who are united to each other by the most endearing ties. They are robbed, by death, of a beloved child, and their hearts bleed at every pore. But does this disturb their love to, or their faith and rest in, each other? Does it

not, on the contrary, unite them more closely than ever?"

"But we see care-worn faces in the Church of Christ, as we do out of it."

"Not in those who cast all their care upon God, as He permits them to do. At this moment, I recall many and many a face, which has acquired an expression of sweet repose, not natural to it, and this is the outward shining of the Guest within. Christ bids us come to Him for rest, and He means come *now*. The spirit of His teachings is not—Be weary and heavy-laden all your lives, and do not expect any better lot here on earth. He says, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.' '*I*' will give it, not, heaven will give it."

"Is not this rest spoken of in the fourth chapter of Hebrews?" asked Claudia.

"Yes, both Christ's rest upon earth, and that which *remaineth* for the people of God.'"

"I thought the heavenly rest was alluded to there," said Apelles, "and that alone."

"The apostle says, 'We that believe *do enter into rest*,' not, we shall never enter into it until death."

Claudia repeated the lines:

> "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
> He will not, He will not, desert to His foes."

"All hell will endeavour to shake it," said Philologus, "but will not prevail."

"But look, now, at some of the saints in the Bible,"

said Amplias. "Look at David, for instance. Was he at peace when indulging in gross sin?"

"Of course not. He was 'giving place to the devil,' and was, therefore, not in the 'green pastures,' or beside the 'still waters' of a pure conscience," said Philologus.

"This subject of religious peace and joy," said Urbané, "is, I fear, but little understood. Let us approach it with reverence, but without timidity. Deep, constant, soul-satisfying delight in God and the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the privilege of every believer, in every age, but the whole history of the Church is illustrated by glorious tokens of its presence and power. No description of human bliss begins to compare with the language of the saints, whose hearts have glowed with this holy passion, both in life and in death. Let me read to you the testimony of one of them:

"'DEAR SISTER,—Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I might date this letter from the land of Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks the happy inhabitant. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me; its breezes fan me; its odours are wafted to me; its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as He approached, and now He fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this

excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm. A single heart and a single tongue seem altogether inadequate to my wants; I want a whole heart for every separate emotion, and a whole tongue to express that emotion.

"'But, why do I speak of myself and my feelings? Why not speak only of our God and Redeemer? It is because I know not what to say. When I would speak of them, my words are all swallowed up. I can only tell you what effects their presence produces, and even of these I can tell you but very little. Oh, my sister, my sister! could you but know what awaits the Christian; could you know only so much as I know, you could not refrain from rejoicing, and even leaping for joy. Labours, trials, troubles, would be nothing; you would rejoice in affliction and glory in tribulations; and, like Paul and Silas, sing God's praises in the darkest night, and in the deepest dungeon. You have known a little of my trials and conflicts, and know that they have been neither few nor small; and I hope this glorious termination of them will serve to strengthen your faith and elevate your hope.

"'And now, my dear, *dear* sister, farewell. Hold on your Christian course but a few days longer, and you will meet in heaven,

"'Your happy and affectionate brother,

"'EDWARD PAYSON.'

"Some of you are aware that this is the language of a man whose physical sufferings it was agonising to witness."

Urbané closed the volume from which he had been reading, and sat down. Silence fell upon the whole company, which was at last broken by Apelles.

"Do you think such revelations come to all Christians?"

"I fear not. Christ cannot thus reveal Himself, save to the beloved disciple."

"And how are such revelations received?" asked Amplias.

"Let the author of this very letter answer for me: 'He (the Christian) shrinks back involuntarily, as if the spotless Saviour would be contaminated by his touch; sinks down, ashamed and broken-hearted, at His feet; feels unworthy and unable to look up; and the more condescendingly Christ stoops to embrace him, so much lower and lower he sinks in the dust.'"

"What do you conceive to be the characteristic of the beloved disciple that so attracted, and still attracts, the Divine eye?" asked Apelles.

"Love; personal, deep-seated, intense love."

"Then the joy of which you have read to us is not given arbitrarily, but is the natural response of Love to love?"

"It is."

"I begin to understand now why David 'danced before the Lord.' Such joy in God must be transporting. May one ask it, specifically, from God?"

"I think not. It is not found in seeking self, but in going out of self to seek Christ. But, on the other hand, it is not necessary to suppress the instinctive desire for rest and peace and joy, which exists in the soul, unless it becomes inordinate. Nowhere in the Bible do we hear such passionate cries for the *gifts* of God as are uttered by the spirit that is athirst for *God, for the living*

God. 'As the hart panteth after the water-brook, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.' 'With my soul I have desired Thee.' 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!' 'My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.'"

"Are you satisfied that the expressions of joy we sometimes meet with in religious biography are not exaggerations?"

"Perfectly so. Nor do I wonder at the difficulty found to depict, in human language, a joy so great and full of glory. Let us recall, however, some of the attempts made in Scripture to do so: 'In Thy presence is fulness of joy.' 'Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures,' or, as it may be rendered, 'They shall be saturated, as a thirsty field, by showers from heaven.' 'Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.' 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.' 'The Lord is my strength and song.' 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' 'I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.' 'I will go to God, my exceeding joy,' or, 'the gladness of my joy.' 'My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee.' 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God.' 'Thy saints shout for joy.' 'Oh, come,' etc. But I might go on all day, and not exhaust the subject."

"Of course we must accept the language of Scripture, but I have always listened dubiously to expressions of religious joy from ordinary Christians," said one.

"'Ordinary Christians' know very little of the deep, absorbing, sacred experience to which I am calling your attention. I make no reference to mere pious frames. They are not to be trusted in; they may proceed from earthly sources, and be followed by sinful tempers and acts that prove their origin to have been false. The delight in God which I am describing is profound and lasting, not merely emotive and transient."

"How are we to distinguish between the two?"

"It is not always possible to do so. But we may be guided in many cases by our knowledge of the character of him who professes to feel the joy. If he is young, and inexperienced, and superficial, he had best maintain a discreet silence. We have also a right to doubt high-wrought claims to religious fervour where we see no corresponding holiness. There are certain worthy persons who injure the cause of Christ by reporting every new frame they experience before it has been put to the test of time and temptation. If a man be habitually irascible, for instance, or is in any way, however trivial, 'regarding iniquity in his heart,' the less he says about his seasons of enjoyment the better. On the other hand, he who is 'alive in Christ,' may find it a duty to declare what great things God hath done for his soul."

"Indiscriminately?" asked Amplias.

"Plutarch says: 'If you possess a treasure your friend does not, you should not tell him of it. But if telling him puts him into the way of gaining it, it is your duty to proclaim it.' But the Psalmist says he will tell his story to those who fear God, and that the '*humble* will hear thereof, and be glad.' He alone who fears God can understand the language of an exulting soul. To believe in the deep experience of another, one must have had more or less experience in kind. If one has not, he will be sceptical on the subject, and listen, perhaps, with sneers."

"Do you think gratitude demands that one should tell what God does for him?" asked Helvia.

"In the right time and place it certainly does."

"But will not nine out of ten attempt to prove that he is deceived, that he is a mere enthusiast, and the like?"

"Not nine out of ten warm-hearted, earnest believers. They know too much to doubt a real experience."

"But does not the opposition of even good people almost amount to persecution?"

"It does. Perhaps a man never is exposed to such rough treatment in his life, as when he tries modestly, humbly, and lovingly to tell what God has done for him, what Christ has become to his soul. It often grows, indeed, out of pure misunderstanding. He is supposed to be a proud boaster, when, in fact, the pride is perhaps altogether on the side of his opponent. St Augustine says, 'Praise the sweetness of honey to the utmost, he

who has never tasted it cannot understand it.' I want to warn you all against suspicion of those who bring grapes of Eschol from the promised land. They only exhibit specimens of fruit that grows there in abundance; they only speak of the milk and honey that flow through it; let them stimulate you to enter, and pluck, and eat for yourselves. Christ is everything He is described to be by His most ardent lovers; yea, far more, for are we not told that joy in Him is 'unspeakable?'"

"Religion has never given me any real happiness, nor does it seem to do it for any save a favoured few," said Apelles.

"It is said, 'the ways of holiness are never truly sweet till they be thoroughly embraced.' And this is true. Christ can make no warm response to a cold heart."

"But what of a man of phlegmatic temperament who is never warm on any subject?"

"Christ can infuse life into dry bones, and warmth into stones. Some persons fancy that those who express joy in Him are of peculiar temperament, and that ecstasy is for the few. This is a mistake. He is King over temperament as over all things. But I have something more to read."

"Now we are upon the subject, may I ask a question first. Would you not prefer to judge a man by his life rather than hear his testimony? Or, if he gives testimony, would it not be less offensive if he should give it unconsciously?" asked Amplias.

"It depends on who and what the man is. I certainly do prefer unconscious admission into the souls of most persons."

"I was once reading a little German story to some children," said Helvia, "which furnishes an illustration. A bear came and spent his winter evenings with two little sisters who never knew what an uncommon bear he was, till one morning, as he was going out, a piece of his fur was torn off on a nail, and through the rent thus made, they learned that under his skin he was made of *pure gold.* It is pleasant to have friends who are better than they seem; to see the Lord's name on their foreheads when they see it not."

"You will have no fault to find with what I am now about to give you," said Urbané: "After a season of spiritual conflict with Satan, Mr William Janeway 'wept for a long time, in an extraordinary manner, though little subject to such emotions, and then broke forth in the language of impassioned exclamation: 'Oh, son! now it is come, it is come, it is come. I bless God I can die; the Spirit of God hath witnessed with my spirit that I am His child. Now I can look upon God as my dear Father, and Christ as my Redeemer; I can now say this is my Friend, and this is my Beloved! My heart is full; it is brim full; I can hold no more. I know now what that sentence means, *The peace of God which passeth all understanding.* I know now what that white stone is, whereon a new name is written which none know but they who have it. And that fit of weep-

ing which you saw in me was a fit of overpowering love and joy, so great, that I could not for my heart contain myself; neither can I express what glorious discoveries God has made of Himself to me. And had that joy been greater, I question if I could have borne it, and whether it would not have separated soul and body. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. . . . Oh, now, I can die, it is nothing; I bless God I can die. I desire to be dissolved and be with Christ.'

"Of another of this family, his biographer writes: 'I once hid myself in his solitary room, to learn the reason of his retiredness, and take the more exact notice of the intercourse which I judged was kept up between him and God. But oh! what a spectacle did I see! Surely a man walking with God, conversing intimately with his Maker, and maintaining a holy familiarity with the great Jehovah. What a glorious sight it was! Methinks I see him still. How sweetly did his face shine! with what a lovely countenance did he walk up and down; his lips going, his body oft reaching up, as if he would have taken his flight into heaven; his looks, smiles, and every motion, spake him to be upon the very confines of glory. Oh, had one but known what he was then feeding on! Sure he had meat to eat which the world knew not of! Did we but know how welcome God made him when He brought him into His banqueting house. That which one might easily perceive his heart to be most fixed upon, was the infinite love of God

in Christ to the poor, lost sons and daughters of Adam. What else meant his high expressions? 'God,' said he, 'holds mine eyes most upon His goodness, and the promises which are most sure and firm in Christ. His love to us is greater, surer, fuller, than ours to ourselves. For when we loved ourselves so as to destroy ourselves, He loved us so as to save us.' He entered the Christian ministry at the age of twenty-two, but only lived to preach two sermons. As he approached his dying hour, he said, 'I do so long to be with Christ, that I could be content to be cut in pieces, and put to the most exquisite torments, so I might but die and be with Christ. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Death, do thy work. Death hath lost its terribleness. Death; it is nothing. I say death is nothing, through grace, to me; I can as easily die as shut my eyes, or turn my head and sleep; I long to be with Christ: I long to die.' The biographer goes on to say, 'I verily believe that it exceeds the highest rhetoric to set out to the life what this heavenly creature did there deliver. I say again, I want words to speak, and so did he, for he said things unutterable; but yet, so much he spake as justly drew the admiration of all that saw him; and I heard an old, experienced minister say it again and again, that he never saw, nor read, nor heard the like. He talked as if he had been in the third heaven. About eight and forty hours before his death, and when the symptoms of death were upon him, his joys were, if possible, greater still. He had so many fits of joy unspeakable, that he seemed to be in one continued

act of seraphic love and praise. Oh, what encouragement did he give to them which did stand by, to follow hard after God, and to follow Christ in a humble, believing, zealous course of life! . . . . And every one must speak God's praise, or else they did make some jar in his harmony. And indeed most did, as they could, help him in praise; so that I never heard nor knew any more praise to God in one room, than in his chamber.'

"Robert Hall, in a brief preface to John Janeway's life, says: 'I am aware that some will object to the strain of devout ecstasy which characterised the sentiments and language of Mr Janeway, in his dying moments; but I am persuaded they will meet with nothing, however ecstatic and elevated, but what corresponds to the dictates of Scripture, and the analogy of faith. He who recollects that the Scriptures speak of a *peace which passeth all understanding*, and of a *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, will not be offended at the lively expressions of those contained in this narrative; he will be more disposed to lament the low state of his own religious feeling, than to suspect the propriety of sentiment the most rational and Scriptural, merely because they rise to a pitch that he has never reached. The sacred oracles afford no countenance to the supposition that devotional feelings are to be condemned as visionary and enthusiastic, merely on account of their intenseness and elevation; provided they be of the right kind, and spring from legitimate sources, they never teach us to expect they can be carried too far. *David danced before*

the Lord with all his might, and when he was reproached for degrading himself before the people, by indulging these transports, he replied, 'If this be to be vile, *I will yet make myself more vile.*'

"Mr Hall goes on to remark that the experience of Mr Janeway is not to be considered as a standard to ordinary Christians, and that the extraordinary devotion of his life met with its just reward, since *he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.* It is an interesting fact that Mr Janeway reproached himself on his death-bed for having lived too active a life. This proves that he had been no mere pious enthusiast, but a diligent labourer in the Master's vineyard. Now, my dear young friends, if you long for such joys as those of these saints, you must *sow bountifully* as they did. Such seraphic hours must be the result of much prosaic, persistent, laborious work and study in the school of life. They are the fruits of the Spirit; but the hand that would pluck them must not be that of an idler, strolling by the wayside, but of one who has patiently climbed to heights far out of sight, and breathed, before reaching it, the atmosphere of heaven itself."

"And do you wish to stimulate us by this night's readings?" asked Apelles.

"I do; making due allowance for depressing physical and other special causes, I maintain that he who does not sometimes find real joy in his God and Saviour, and abide in daily peace with Him, is living in some sin, or cherishing some idol, that hides the light of life that is

always shining, and always ready to let its beams warm and vivify the believing soul."

"Such language is enough to drive one to despair!" said Apelles.

"It is intended only to encourage. Oftentimes a sincere soul only needs to have the obstacles in its way pointed out in order to remove them with his own hand. If you earnestly desire holiness and happiness, you will be only too thankful for suggestions such as have just been made. I certainly do not suppose that any of you are living in conscious, wilful sin, or indulging yourselves in known idolatry, while yet, at the same time, seeking for sanctification as the great boon of life."

"Is this joy, of which you have spoken, the fruit of an untroubled sense of personal safety?" asked Amplias.

"It is rather the result of a nearness to Christ that enables one to see Him as He is. The testimony of President Edwards is that of every mature Christian, when he says: 'The sweetest joys and delights I have experienced have not been those that have arisen from the hope of my own good estate, but in a direct view of the glorious things of the Gospel.'"

"I have always been a little suspicious of deathbed experiences," said one. "Why should there be special raptures then?"

"I have called your attention," was the reply, "to a sanctifying work of the Spirit that is the beginning of rapid, healthful growth in grace, and of a happiness

that cannot be exaggerated. But the soul thus sanctified and purified is not *mature* in holiness, and the moment of maturity is generally that preceding death. To use the illustration of another, the shock of wheat is gathered in as soon as it is perfectly ripe. Therefore the joy of the ripe Christian will naturally culminate during his last hours on earth, and be very much akin to that on which he is about to enter."

"But he may have peace and joy long before he comes to his deathbed," said Antiochus.

"Yes," said Hermes; "peace that flows like a river, intermingled with joy never before conceived of."

"There are some in this room," continued Urbané, "who cannot speak in public, but are not silent because they have nothing to say, or because they do not know what this joy of the Lord is, or because they are ashamed to confess Christ before men. Seek them out, and talk with them in private. They will all tell you that they have had views of Christ that were soul-satisfying, and, at times, almost overwhelming, and this without the slightest thought of self or regard to their estate before Him. To those who have had no such experiences, they are in danger of appearing mere enthusiasts, while they will be affectionately recognised and believed in by those who have had ever so little."

"But do not many saintly persons die without any of the revelations, during their last hours, of which you have spoken?" was asked.

"This is unquestionably the case. The character of

almost every form of fatal disease is such as to overmaster the soul; we ought not to expect the shout of triumph to be frequent amid scenes of dissolution. God knows just when, and how often, to call forth dying testimony; but His chief witnesses testify of Him during life, and while in possession of a certain degree of health."

"Besides," said Philologus, "record is more likely to be made of a man's last utterances than those made earlier. I do not doubt that as great joy as that of Janeway on his deathbed is sometimes experienced long before the final hour."

"I can say amen to every word you have uttered," said Urbané, "and there are several in this room who can do the same, as there are, I do not doubt, thousands elsewhere. They have not had to wait for a deathbed to introduce them to a world of light, and love, and peace, and joy unspeakable offered by our Lord to every one of His followers. There is not a verity on earth more true than this, that he who, abiding in Christ, lives and walks with God, is alone truly happy, and that the closer the walk, the happier he will be. Is it not so, dear Hermes? Have you not found it so, Antiochus?"

"If I begin to talk, I am afraid I shall keep you here all night," said Antiochus.

The genial smile on the face of Hermes was answer enough; he could not trust himself to speak.

There was not a man or woman there who did not

go home that night to pray. And during the months that followed, one after another received the blessing Urbané so earnestly sought for them. And so diverse are the operations of the Spirit, that while some received it after seeking it long and carefully, and with tears, it came to others through simple, child-like acknowledgment that it was wanted. "Gladness and singleness of heart" came into many a home; Christian love and sweet fellowship made the "communion of saints," and hundreds of unregenerate souls were brought into the kingdom. This is no creation of a disordered fancy. Let Christ's disciples consecrate themselves to Him as He commands and urges them to do, and live and work for Him as He lived, and worked, and prayed, and died for them, and the bright morning of the millennial day will dawn, and the sons and daughters of earth will walk it in the beauty of holiness, and find it Paradise regained.

THE END.

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